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["NO," I CRIED—"THAT IS—HE IS NOTHING TO ME! YOU SHOULD NOT ASK ME THESE QUESTIONS, COUSIN JOE!"]

DIANA'S DIAMONDS.

CHAPTER X.

I soon fell into my place at Rivals' Green, and my days passed pleasantly enough. The grounds, though neglected, were pretty, the gardens almost as fertile in their way as those of the old palace. The demesne was imposing (but all let out for grazing), and the house itself, shabby and comfortable, was an ever-ending source of interest and new discoveries to me.

Innocent as I was, I soon grasped the fact that Uncle Isaac was not rich. The carriage-horses were really work-horses, and spent their days in a plough or a cart. The staff of servants consisted of a wicked-looking old butler, a gardener, cook, and a couple of country girls.

Our fare at table came from the poultry-yard and garden, and we never saw any company. Indeed, it seemed to be that my dreams of "seeing the world" were never to

be fulfilled, and that I had only exchanged one life of retirement for another.

The novelty of everything pleased me very much, and at present I was content.

Uncle, Carrie, and Joe vied with each other in their kindness to me, and I liked them all extremely, and unburdened my mind on the subject to Peggy as she brushed my yellow locks previous to my retirement for the night.

Peggy was not enthusiastic—she never was. She received my impressions with grunts, which might mean anything, and tugged at my hair in quite a savage manner, as she sometimes said,—

"Oh! I'm glad you're pleased; long may you stay so!"

The routine of our day was as follows: Breakfast at nine for Carrie and I—Joe never appeared before eleven or twelve. Then housekeeping for Carrie until lunch-time, and then she and I generally went for a walk or a drive in a funny little trap like a clothes-basket, drawn by a fat white pony.

Carrie was always most agreeable; she told me histories of her own young days, of her lovers, her conquests—all of which were of

the most brilliant description. She asked me many odd questions, gave me various hints about my manners, which certainly left much to be desired, and praised me mightily for my face and figure. I really was quite out of countenance occasionally, her admiration was so painfully frank.

Joe flattered me too, but in a much more veiled and delicate manner. I liked Joe very much, he was so amusing. Occasionally he escorted me in the clothes-basket, but the evening, especially after dinner, were the times to see him at his best.

Uncle was generally shut up in the library, a room lined with books from floor to ceiling; but from casual observation when I have ventured there in quest of a volume, it did not strike me that he read much except the papers and letters! He wrote and received many letters, so did Joe; that is to say, dozens came for him by post in blue envelopes. They used to lie unopened for days; and I have seen him toss half-a-dozen into the fire without even glancing at their contents. I thought this a very curious proceeding, and inquired the reason from Carrie with my usual innocence.

"Why does Joe never read his letters?"
She repeated.—
"Because I fancy they do not interest him my sweet child; they are bills—duns—"

"Duns—bills! and what are they?"
"May you long continue in your present ignorance," and she laughed.

"But what are they? You have not told me yet."

"When Joe gets things—clothes, wine, cigars, etc.—he does not pay for them on the spot, and after a while people write for their money—send in their bills for payment. You understand?"

"And does he pay them?"

"Not he!" she answered lightly.

"How odd! Why not?"

"Because he has no money. Is not that an excellent reason?"

"Then he should not take things he knows he can't pay for; it's only another form of stealing!"

"My dear downright child, you do not know what you are saying. Almost everyone does this. You wait till you see more of the world!"

"If the world is of this description I would much rather not see it at all!" I cried, passionately.

"Ah, so you say now, but time works wonders. Here comes Joe!" as Joe lounged into the room with slippers on his feet, and a paper in his hand—a pink newspaper.

"Joe, we have just been talking about you," I said boldly.

I saw him dart a sharp glance at Carrie as he replied,—

"And I hope my character has fared well at your hands."

"It does not fare well at your own! Why do you order things and never pay for them?"

"Here is my pretty cousin goldy locks taking me to task," he said, helping himself to devilled bones and chariot—his idea of breakfast. "And who says I never pay my bills?"

I was silent; I did not like to incriminate Carrie.

"My tradespeople have only to exercise a little patience; they will all be paid sooner or later—most probably sooner. What do you say, oh! Car?" and he looked at Carrie with a significant smile, and then they both laughed.

As for myself I failed to see the point of the joke, and continued to speak with the utmost gravity,—

"I am glad to hear that you will pay them, Joe. It would be too cruel if you did not pay them, and I would be sorry to think ill of you, cousin Joe."

"Cruel if I did not pay them? It is they who are cruel in making me pay! My tailor has a house at Brighton, and a shooting-box in Scotland; his wife has her diamonds, and her carriage and pair. My wine-merchant entertains the nobility and sends his daughters to Court. It is they who are cruel in pressing an unfortunate beggar like me. I would be only too glad to pay them now, this moment, if I had the coin. As to your thinking ill of me, my charming Indian princess, that would be more than I could possibly stand—that I would not bear. As long as I am in your good graces I care for nothing; the world may wag as it pleases outside the gates of 'Rivals' Green.'"

As he made this speech I thought I detected Carrie giving him a sly glance out of the corner of her eye, and it was made in an odd, bantering tone that I could hardly decide whether he was in jest or earnest. Soon afterwards he concluded his meal, called for his boots, and having lit a cigar invited me to go for a stroll with him through the woods, an invitation that I gladly accepted, for a more entertaining companion could not be found.

When I returned from fetching my hat I stood in the deep doorway as I fastened it on. The door was open, and I was an involuntary listener to the following scrap of conversation.

"Not by any means a fool, so do not be revealing my weaknesses. I think the fruit is nearly ripe—nearly ready to be plucked, eh?"

"No, no, no!" in Carrie's voice. "Do nothing rash, or you will spoil all!"

Then as I pushed back the door, she cried in quite another key,—

"So here you are. We are talking about the early strawberries. Do you like strawberries?"

Were they—query very much were they—talking about the early strawberries? This occurred to me later, but I never questioned the facts now.

"Tell me, cousin Joe, why this place was called Rivals' Green?" I said as I walked along beside him.

"Certainly I will; because down there, between those two copper-beech trees, a duel was fought one hundred years ago, and both the principals were killed. One was shot on the spot, the other lingered for some days, and then expired."

"And why did they fight?"

"Need you ask? About one of your sex, of course! About a namesake of yours, a beautiful Diana Manners, who set the whole county by the ears. They were both her suitors, and she played off one against the other. She really cared for one of them, and he was shot on the spot; they say she witnessed the duel from the windows. It took place in the early morning, after a ball, where the two men had high words about a dance, or some such folly."

"And what became of her?"

"Oh! she died, and served her right, for she was an arrogant fiend, playing fast and loose with people. You would never do that, I am sure, would you, my sweet cousin?"

"No. When I say no, I mean no—always."

"But, surely you have never said no—the fatal no—to anyone yet? You are too young."

"Yes I have, on two occasions."

This announcement took Joe so much by surprise that he actually halted, and looked at me.

"Have said 'no' twice! Have you, goldy locks? Well, I hope the third time will be the charm, and that then you will say 'yes.'"

"I do not wish to get married."

"Well, not just yet! Why; you are barely eighteen, but I am sure you will be married before six months are over your head."

"I don't think that is likely, even if I was willing. We never see any one, except on Sunday over the curtains of the pew, or now and then when we drive into Ashton to do a little shopping (these expeditions and purchases, though on a small scale, were delightful to me). There is no one to marry here. I can say, like the girl in the dream of fair women,—

"There are no men to govern in this wood."

"And pray what do you call me?" cried Joe, taking off his hat.

"Oh! I call you cousin Joe," I returned, with much composure. "You are a relation, and I like you very much, but you count for nothing. Tell me, cousin," changing the conversation, as it seemed to be getting rather personal, "how is it that you never come down to breakfast in the morning?"

"Oh! has not Carrie told you the reason? Indeed, I should have thought a clever girl like you would have guessed it for herself. Why, the thing is as plain as the sun in the heavens," pointing upwards with his cane. "I do not come down early to breakfast because my health is delicate, and early rising knocks me up. I can't stand it—it kills me."

"Are you more delicate than Uncle? He rises at seven," I inquired in amazement.

"Far more; my constitution is miserable! He is as strong as a horse. Don't I look seedy?"

"If you mean ill no; not to me, but then I am no judge. The only thing wrong about

you is your skin, those ugly red blotches on your face and nose."

"Incurable! so it's no use talking of it. Now, my pretty goldy locks, I want to ask you a question or two. How in the world did you compass two proposals of marriage in the jungle, where you have told me ten times you never saw a soul besides your father and two servants?"

"We had three visitors once—a shooting party."

"And you shot two of them with Cupid's bow and arrow—eh?"

"So they said—at least, they asked me to marry them. Is that not the same thing?"

"Not always. Who were these two? What were their names?"

"That I can't tell you—they were an uncle and nephew."

"Oh! And what about number three? Did he not lay his heart at your feet also?"

"No. Were not two amply sufficient?"

"Ah! ah! You get rosy red—you look away! There is something up about number three. I'll bet a pony you have a soft spot for number three. Come, now, tell me the truth?"

"No—that is—he is nothing to me. You should not ask me these questions, cousin Joe."

"And pray why not, my lovely goldy-locks? You have been putting me through my feelings—you ask me why I don't pay my bills—why I don't rise early in the morning, and I answer you as frankly as possible. Why should you not oblige me? Why should you get your back up when I put a mild little query about number three who did not propose; but when I allude to him you blush quite distressingly! It strikes me that number three stole your heart, goldy locks, and that he loved and rode away."

And he began to sing in a bantering way,—

"This morn is merry June, I trow,
The roses budding fair;
But it shall bloom, in winter snow,
Ere we two meet again, fair love,
Ere we two meet again!

"He turned his charger as he spoke
Upon the river shore.
He gave the bridle-rein a shake,
Adieu, forever more, my love!
Adieu, for ever more!"

Joe finished off the "ever more" with a swirl of his voice, for which I could have struck him, and then he said,—

"I believe you lived by a river, so it is quite appropriate, isn't it?"

"No it is not—not in any way!" I cried, passionately. "And if you tease me, or say any more about number three, I—I—"

Here I actually burst into tears, like the uncontrolled savage that I was; and, turning away, I darted down the nearest pathway, and made my way back to the house as fast as I could run.

I did not see Joe again till dinner time, when he met me just as usual. After dinner he and I played chess, and then he sang—his singing was always a treat. Among other things he favoured us with the one which he had treated me to in the morning. It was the last song he sang. As he closed the piano, he said to Carrie,—

"That is a particular favourite of Diana's. I must practise it up. I was singing it to her in the woods to-day! Was I not, child?"

And with a laugh, he rose and strolled out of the room, rehearsing as he went with great expression,—

"Adieu for ever more, my love,
Adieu, for ever more!"

I went up to bed in a rather curious fear of mind, and I said to myself, as I put myself into Peggy's hands, that I had never liked cousin Joe so little as I did that evening!

CHAPTER XI.

"I've a queer piece of news for you, Miss Rance," said Peggy as she brushed my hair one evening.

"Have you indeed! Well, let me hear it, Peg."

"You know, of course, there was no need for Tony here, and no employment, so he went away a month ago to his brother's in London—his brother as has a well-to-do small grocer shop off the Edgware-road. Well, and I always laid out that I'd stay with you, least-ways till you was married."

"Of course you will, Peg, and that will be for a long time."

"It appears that it went wrong, for I'm to go!"

"Go where?" I asked, incredulously.

"Wherever I like, as long as I clear out of this!"

"Then if you go I'll go too," I said, with great emphasis.

"My darlin' child, how can you! Hasn't your uncle all your money? and isn't he your guardian. You must bide here until you are one-and-twenty."

"Then so must you. Who wants to send you away?"

"Mrs. Manners, the widow. She gave me my wages and a month's warning to-day, and told me to go off on the sly, so as not to grieve you. Grieve you, indeed! Oh, she was as sweet as fresh butter! 'And why need I go at all ma'm?' says I. 'Because we can't afford so many servants.' Still that need not trouble you," says I, 'Miss Rance as heaps of money, and anyway, I am willing to stay without wages.'

"This just shut her mouth for five minutes and then she says, 'Peggy, you have Miss Diana's interest at heart, and I'll tell you the truth, and you will understand us. We want to do our best for the sweet child; and worthy and excellent as you are, your accent and manners are not what ought to be about her. You can see it yourself; she wants a smart English maid about her without delay. She has a slight brogue as it is, and has not the faintest idea of dressing herself. I am sure you would like her to shine, and to be admired in society, says she.'"

"And what did you say?"

"Oh! I agreed, and I gave in, and I laid a lot of blame on her; for I saw fighting was no use!"

"You gave in—you agreed?"

"Over the left, darlin'! I'm not going one foot at present."

"And how will you manage that?"

"I made to be taken very ill, so that they dar not stir me, and mind and back me up, and say I'm used to getting these heavy turns."

"And what good will that do?"

"Just wait and see," now going over to the door and turning the key in the lock. "To begin with, I'll be taken ill here so as to have one night with you, at any rate—to school you. They'll move me to-morrow. Now attend to me with all your ears, Miss Rance, for I may not get such a handy chance again."

"I am attending," I said, pushing back my long plaits as if to hear better.

"You were always brave, and had a stout heart, and be me honour you will want it all now."

"Why?" I asked, breathlessly.

"Hush, speak low! I've been watching them all this two months, and I have the measure of every one of them. Your uncle, the cousin, and the widow are all wicked, bad, scheming people, every mother's son of them. Oh! wirra, wirra! Little did the poor master know, not having laid an eye on his brother for thirty years, that he was sending his orphan child straight into a den of lions, but I'll never leave her while I can breathe and walk. Never, as sure as my name is Peggy Clarke."

"You are talking in riddles, Peggy; and perhaps you will explain yourself, so that I may understand you!"

"Is it riddles? Oh, then, they are soon explained! I have kept my eyes open, and my mouth shut, and I've picked up a great deal of information to which I make you kindly welcome. First and foremost, your grandfather had two sons, Isaac and John. Isaac stayed at home idle, waiting on the old man's shoes. John took his degree in medicine, and went to India to seek his fortune. He got no money when the father died, Isaac took it all. He persuaded the old man against making a will, and he made a clean sweep of the place—the money, the plate, and did not give his brother what would lie in your finger nail. He married young, and had two sons—Paul and Joe. Paul married a governess, who soon made it up with his father, though he was wild at first. That's Mrs. Carrie down below. Paul was a terrible man! He spent, and he drank, and he gambled, and he did all sorts of wickedness, and driving home one night, when he was half-dead over, he fell out of a dog-cart and broke his neck! Then his widow came here, and has lived here ever since. And when she tells you stories of 'her sainted Paul' she is telling you lies. She's a grand hand at them!"

"Oh! Peggy!"

"Yes! and oh! Peggy! Joe is walking after Paul as fast as he can go! He never earned a shilling in his life. He dare not show his face for debt and other devilment. They say he has forged! Oh! he is altogether too bad for me to talk about. And do you know the reason he never comes down to breakfast till nigh twelve o'clock? I'm sure you don't!"

"I'm sure I do! He told me—his health!"

"Did he tell you that he never went to bed sober in his life?—the ugly rascal!"

"Oh! Peggy, no!"

"And Peggy has seen him many a time staggering up to bed, and old Andrew helping him and carrying the candle. Oh! he's a nice lad! And as to the old man, he ought to be making his soul instead of striving to destroy other people's soul and body. He lost all his money gambling in shares. He has the place mortgaged to the very hall-door, and money borrowed till he can borrow no more. He has a bad name, and 'twas well earned, for he is a rale old rascal!"

"Oh! Peggy! What is this you are telling me? Is it true? It can't be true? You are mistaken. You are prejudiced. Surely father would know?"

"How would he? He left the country thirty years ago, and left home coolly enough. He never wrote much—and they wrote less. In time he forgot the hard man his brother Isaac was. As to regarding what I'm telling you, he might just as well have sent you right into a robbers' den. You are just like a lamb sent to the shepherds, and they are only waiting till I go to clip you bare, and turn you out into the bitter cold world!"

"How do you know, Peggy?"

"I know that such a stroke of luck as getting made guardian to an heiress with forty thousand pounds he never expected. It has set his credit on its legs again. I know he has drawn a year's interest, nigh a thousand pounds, and spent it paying off old bills—mind you, with your money!"

"And yet he made a great fuss about giving me ten pounds for clothes, saying he was responsible to my father's memory for every halfpenny."

"He will make more fuss than that yet, the old hypocrite. He means to have it all, him and Mr. Joe between them, and Mrs. Carrie will help them, and get something for her trouble. Mind you forty thousand pounds is no blind nest!"

"And what do they mean to do?" I asked anxiously.

"Well, Mr. Joe is to marry you, and then they will keep you here, hand and foot. At first they thought they had a baby to deal with, but I gather that you are sharper than they suppose. It is going to be, Will you walk

into my parlour says the spider to the fly, but they won't get the fly if Peggy Clarke can help it. I misdoubted Mrs. Carrie from the first, with all her sweetness, and her kisses, and the questions she asked me, and the wicked eye like a needle in her head; and I mistrusted Joe and his red nose, but I had hoped some good of the old man; but he is the worst of the three. 'Tis he makes the bullets, and the other two fire them."

"And what am I to do?"

"Never let on a word I have told you. Be as sweet as sugar; your new hand at acting and playing the hypocrite, but it must be done; if you look black and sour, my darlin' child, they will suspect."

At this moment an angry knock came to the door, and Carrie's voice said sharply,—

"It's not possible that you are not in bed, Diana, and that Peggy Clarke is keeping you up talking? Send her down at once."

"Oh! me lady! me lady!" cried Peggy, aside to me, "open the door." I'm nearly destroyed with the cramps. Oh what will I do, what will I do, at all—at all—at all—at all. I believe I'm dying."

Biddy had undergone a transformation in the second. There she sat on a chair, with the tail of her gown over her head, rocking herself to and fro in a paroxysm of some kind, and moaning in the most heartrending manner. Her attack looked the most natural thing in the world, and was what one would call done to the life.

Carrie, I could see, was impressed, and turning to me, said very eagerly,—

"Is she often like this? Did you ever see her so bad before?"

To which I responded, with entire truth "Never."

"What can we do for her? She can't stop here!"

"If you would fetch me the laste in life of brandy-and-water, just a thimbleful," said Biddy, "I would not say but I might come round, Mrs. Manners, dear; only I don't like to be troubling you at this hour of the night. If I had a drop of something warm—it will have to be hot—I might get back to me own room."

"Could you not move first, and I will bring it to you in bed?" said Carrie, approaching and offering her support. "Come along, and I'll help you."

"If you wor to lay a finger on me, and if I was to put one foot before the other, I believe I could not help screaming, so as they would hear me out in the read. Best let me stay here. I'll lie down on the floor, and Miss Rance will put a pillow under my head, presently."

I could see that Carrie did not like this idea at all, and she most reluctantly departed in search of the needful remedy.

As the door closed on her Biddy straightened her back, resumed her usual expression, and said,—

"Did I not do that well? She will be away a good twenty minutes, and I've a deal to say yet. I doubt if she will ever give us the chance again."

"You did it splendidly certainly, Biddy, but I am not sure that it was right."

"Arrah! get out with your nonsense. Anything is right when we are among rogues and rascals of thieves to get away from them. You did your part badly; you did not look half sorry or frightened enough! Only she was so taken up with me she would have remarked it. Well, time is precious, and I'm pretty sure she will never leave us alone again, and she will be listening at doors and watching. This is our last chance before she gets me out of her house. See, here is Tony's address. If you ever want a home and a place to stay in there's his brother, Thomas Clark, 202, Lavender-place, Edgware-road. Have you any money, alannah?"

"I have nearly ten pounds."

"That's right, don't show it. Keep it close, and pretend you have not a farthing. That money is your safety; and keep an eye on

year watch, or they will take it, and all your little trinkets."

"It is gone, the watch. Uncle took it to get the spring mended."

"Yes for fear you'd bribe someone by-and-by. Oh! he's a deep one. The money is your safety, and them diamonds is your danger. I'd have them all sown into the lining of your pincushion over there, and never let on a word about them as you value your life. So mind what I'm telling you!"

"Carrie knows!" I faltered, faintly.

"What! How?"

"She asked me one day what became of the diamonds the Begum gave father, and what they were like. I said they were a necklace, and she asked me if it was sold, I said no, and she pressed me very very much to say what had become of them, but I would not tell her."

"That's a good girl. Keep her so," said Biddy emphatically.

"It's all very fine to say *keep her so!* but she is very inquisitive, and is continually asking questions."

"Let her ask! There's no harm in asking as long as you don't answer her."

"But I must answer her, Peggy, and I must speak the truth before all things; you understand that."

"I see no harm in throwing dust in the eyes of bad people when they are sneaking round to try and find out where you keep valuables."

"It's only natural curiosity, perhaps."

"And is it natural for Mrs. Manners to be coming and prying, rooting among your things when you are out? Will you tell me that?"

"How do you know she does this?"

"How? easy enough. I came here unexpected the other afternoon, when you were out with Mr. Joe, and I heard some one at the wardrobe. Sure enough, there she was with her back to me, very busy as it were, turning out the whole place! When she heard me she was not a bit put out—oh! not she. She made out she used to keep her things in the wardrobe, and was looking for her best crêpe veil. Crêpe veil, indeed—it's a veil that has a great look of a diamond necklace she is after. If once she lays eyes on it, it will be a bad job. I always knew jewels in a house was dangerous, and that diamond necklace will get you into trouble yet. Now, mind, I tell you so."

"She does not know it is in the house."

"I expect she has her suspicions, seeing it's the only thing you are close about. Whist! I hear her!"

In another second Biddy was once more rocking herself to and fro in a kind of paroxysm, and moaning and groaning as if she was going to die, when Carrie entered, carrying a steaming tumbler of whisky-punch.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN my cousin by marriage had departed, carrying off Peggy, I went to bed, but not to sleep.

I had a great deal to think of. Peggy had opened my eyes, figuratively speaking, in such a way that it was quite impossible to close them.

I turned and tossed till daybreak, and when I thought of Joe and his matrimonial designs my heart beat so fast that I was obliged to set up in bed and lay my hand on it to try and keep down its palpitations.

Towards morning I fell into a sound sleep, and was so late downstairs that I breakfasted with Joe for once in my life!

Joe was so witty and agreeable that what I had heard last night seemed like a bad dream.

He looked so spruce, too, with every lock in its place, his snowy linen and scented handkerchief. It seemed monstrous to suppose that Andrews, who now waited on him so

solemnly, had been a few hours previous helping him upstairs when he was helplessly intoxicated.

Carrie was so affectionate, and uncle so benevolently anxious to know if my late appearance was due to illness, that I told myself that I must not be led away with Peggy's prejudices, but endeavour to judge calmly and fairly of my strange relations.

Peggy established herself as an invalid, as she had declared was her intention, and in some marvellous manner she obtained a reprieve, and was allowed to remain on for a week or two longer.

I believe she told Carrie that she was waiting until Tony could take some particular cottage they had both set their hearts on, and that she was only counting the minutes till she was her own mistress and done with service for the rest of her life.

She told this tale with such an air of reality that Carrie believed her. I am sure she thought she was a simple old woman in inferior health, who, to use Peggy's own expression, "was rather bothered in the head" through being so long in India!

I took an early opportunity of letting Peggy know that I did not go along with her in her bad opinion of the household, to which she sharply answered,—

"Well, if you don't now you soon will!" and bounced out in a rage.

And I soon did. The first thing that brought me round to her way of thinking was a proposal from Joe.

Joe took rather a mean advantage of me, as he and I were jogging along the lanes behind the fat white pony, and I had no possible means of escape.

I was admiring the wildflowers in the hedges, and taking in my very first sniff of new-mown hay, and expatiating on the beauty of the surrounding woods and fields, when he said, as he gave the pony a flick,—

"I am glad you like it, Cousin Diana! Do you like me?"

Thus taken aback I stammered out,—

"Yes, cousin Joe! why not?"

"I'm glad to hear that, for I'm uncommonly fond of you!" now changing the reins into his left hand and putting his arm round my waist and drawing me close to him.

"Oh! don't!—don't!" I cried, struggling and becoming very hot in the face. "Leave go! take away your arm at once!"

"Don't!—and why don't? You are going to be my nice little wife, are you not?" holding me as if in a vice, and turning his red face and dull grey eyes towards mine as he spoke.

"Not indeed I am not! Please let me go. I hate being held. I—I am never going to marry anyone!"

"Not even me? Oh, yes! my pretty cousin! Wait till you hear all I have to say, and then you will change your mind, I know!"

"Well, please take away your arm first, please."

The detested arm removed, he said,—

"In the first place I am very spoony on you; I am not impressionable generally, and I really am quite surprised at the depth of my feelings, I really am!"

I mentally wondered if they were in any way connected with my purse.

Secondly, the match was your father's wish; thirdly, it has my father's hearty approval."

"How do you know that it was my father's wish?"

"He wrote to the governor and said so."

"But I know that he always said he did not approve of the marriage of first cousins. Neither do I—it's much too close a relationship."

"Well, he changed his mind apparently, and I know you will change yours. I shall take a nice little house in London—central situation. We will be as happy as the day is long. I'll take you to all the theatres, all the best race-meetings, and rig you out in the prettiest frocks to be had for money. I'll show you

the world; you are buried alive here; we will run over to Paris for the honeymoon—two if you like. Come, now, won't all these things tempt you?"

"Not to marry, cousin Joe. Why should I? I can do all the things you mention—go to theatres and races, and wear pretty frocks, without being anyone's wife. It's only a question of money. I like you very well as you are, and let us stay as we are, just friends and cousins!"

As I made this speech a kind of hard, fixed look came over his face; his jaw seemed to jerk forward, his eyes took a truculent, threatening look, as he said,—

"You can only enjoy these delights through me, and in my company!"

"And why, pray?"

"Because my father will never trust you out of his sight. You are his ward. You will have to vegetate here year in and year out, and you will never get such a chance again as I am now offering you. Don't curl your lip; you can't afford to be saucy."

"Can I not?"

"No; it's not every one would marry you, my lovely Indian princess, with all your golden hair and golden charms."

"Very likely not; and I don't want to marry at all!"

"No one would marry you but me."

"Pardon me, I know to the contrary!"

"Oh, yes, those two fellows out in India, but then they did not know there was anything against you. Of course, they would have had to be told, and then their name would have been Walker," and he laughed disagreeably.

"What does that mean?"

"It means, my little innocent, that they would bid you farewell. It means that no man but myself would care about marrying John Manners's daughter!"

"And why? What is there against me?"

"Ah! that is a secret."

"Which I certainly ought to know, and must know!" I cried, fiercely.

"There is no *must* about it. It is enough for you to hear that there is a cloud on you and your name."

"But why? Where did it come from?"

"Ah! that I am not going to say. I'll tell you when we are married. I am willing to marry you just as you are, my charming goldy locks. Your face is temptation enough for me!"

"And what about my fortune?" I inquired, sharply.

"It makes a nice setting for my pearl of cousins, whom I intend to win and wear."

"Never! never!" I broke out, passionately.

"At one time I liked you, cousin Joe—nay, not an hour ago. Now I cannot endure you, or your company. Let me get out!" standing up in the trap. "I shall walk home!"

"No, that you won't!" pulling me down roughly. "If you behave well you'll be treated well; but if you give us any of your airs and nonsense you will find yourself very much in the wrong box!"

Could this be my gallant, polished cousin Joe?—this red-faced, violent, angry man! It seemed impossible.

"When you treat me like this now, when you pretend to be my lover, how would you not use me if I were your wife?" I demanded with angry scorn.

"How, indeed!" and he grinned with ferocious significance.

After his remark I relapsed into dead silence, and neither of us opened our lips till we reached the hall-door at "The Green"—as it was called for short.

When next we met—at dinner time a change had come over the spirit of Joe's dream. He was conciliatory, apologetic, humble. *Who* had been talking to him?

As to uncle Isaac and Carrie, they lavished fond words and caresses upon me without stint.

For the next three days Carrie never ceased to urge Joe's cause with all the eloquence at

her command. What more suitable? Money and place to go together! My father's wish! Joe's devotion—poor dear Joe, who pleaded his own cause so badly! He had told her, and said things in a rage for which he could have bitten his tongue out afterwards.

Then my uncle brought his heavy guns to bear on me—the weight of his authority, and my father's letter, which he refused to show me.

All the same I was stubborn, and high words—yes, very high words—were used, especially by uncle. He insisted, he stormed, he came out in different colours to what he had ever appeared in before. He dropped the mask with a vengeance.

At the end of ten days, of overtures from Joe, advice from Carrie, and dreadful interviews with uncle in the library, I was a miserable object—nervous, trembling, with eyes sunken, and cheeks blotched by hours of exhausting scenes, and hours of crying.

As I was obstinate I was put in Coventry, ostensibly for being rude and impertinent, and disrespectful to uncle, and told that until I was more in a frame of mind to mix with other people, and less like a savage from an Indian jungle—in short, I was not to return to the bosom of the family until I knew how to behave myself, and was more civilized.

Never in all my life had I known restraint and harshness until now, and I was utterly miserable. I knew that I was banished, not on account of insolence and ill-manners, but because I was to be subdued into accepting my cousin Joe as my husband. This I assured myself, as I paced my room from end to end, I would never do. I had a fine strong will of my own that nothing they could do would ever break.

I was resolved to remain up there all my life if it came to that, and to die sooner than marry my cousin Joe.

No one was as forlorn and friendless, I thought, in this world as myself. I had no one to help me, no one on whom I had the very least claim besides the people in the house, my nearest relations—pretty relations! It would have been well for me now had I accepted Mr. Hinkson.

For a whole week I had not seen Peggy. She was a sham invalid, I was a real prisoner!

The days were interminable. I had no books, no work. Twice a day, Carrie, with a stony face, brought me my rather scanty meals on a tray, and the rest of the time I passed in that pleasant occupation which is known as "eating one's heart out."

On the seventh day, as I sat dull and miserable, and had pushed away a tray of uninviting food—some slices of cold boiled mutton, dry bread, and a glass of water,—the door opened gently, and Peggy crept in, dressed merely in a petticoat, a shawl, and a much-befrilled nightcap, that made her look like the grandmother in Red Ridinghood (not that odd ideas were likely to amuse me then). With a bound that nearly knocked her down I flung myself into her arms and burst into tears.

"Whist!—whist! I am here! Stole out out of bed on the sly! Keep up, Miss Rance, and listen! I have a grand plan. We will settle it all now, and you may cry as much as you like afterwards. They are all out in the garden, and now is our time. Did I not tell you they were real nagurs? We will soon be out of it, please goodness! I am going to get you to find out their scheme—they have a great one in hand. I want you to play the listener for once. Have you courage?"

"Courage! of course I have! Courage for anything that will get me away from them and this odious place!"

"All right! I've dressed up a bolster in my bed, and give orders I was not to be disturbed, as I have taken a sleeping draught. So I can stay the night here—or, anyway, I'll stop a good bit with you, honey—and you can hide me in the cupboard!"

"And what is your plan?"

"Tis this. You know the big old clock in the dining-room? It's got no works, and stands between the windows; it would hold two of you. I'm going to shut you up in it for a couple of hours to hear their plans. It's open at the top, and gives lots of air!"

"Peggy! you must be out of your mind!"

"Aye! Peggy has her wits still! Every night the three of them sit in the dining-room concocting and planning something. Now we must find out what that something is—and that this very night—and then we will be even with them! We will slip down now in the dusk. But first I'll dress up a figure in your bed, and draw the curtains, and pull down the blinds. And do you ring now, while I stand in the cupboard, and tell Jane you have a bad headache, and are going to bed, and don't want no candles!"

This order being carried out with all the composure I could assume, whilst Biddy stepped into a hanging closet, from whence, after Jane had departed, she emerged, and proceeded to dress up a grand lay figure of me, and lay it my place. It really looked quite alarmingly natural, and as she arranged this dummy she talked incessantly the whole time under her breath—and so did I, to tell the truth!

"For days they have been hatching schemes, and to-night we must know what they are up to. It's our only chance, for Joe and the widow are going away somewhere to-morrow! I made out that much. I think the old eight-day clock is a great notion. There's two holes below the face where you can see, and it's all open at the top!"

"What shall I do if I cough or sneeze?"

"You must not do one or other for your very life!"

"I wish you would play the spy instead of me, Peggy! I don't like it. I don't think it is right or honourable. I am sure papa would not have approved of it; he would have said it was mean!"

"Your father would have broken their necks long ago!—much less think bad of standing by to listen to their wicked plans to strive to defeat them. He is dead and gone, and you must look on me as if I stood in his place—though I was never in his station. You be said and led as I'm telling you, and I'm doing my very best for you. Sure and aren't you all the same as my own?"

"Indeed you are, Peggy! and the only friend I have in the whole wide world; and I will do whatever you wish—eavesdropping and all!" I said, impetuously.

"I'd do that part myself, and with pleasure; only you see, darling, I'm so broad across the shoulders, and so stout, the clock would never hold me at any price; and you are so tall and slim! You are just the size for it, and, indeed, now the sooner you are inside it the better! It's dark enough to creep downstairs, and your black dress will look like a shadow. Andrew is out, Jane is up the road, and the coast is clear—so come along!" softly opening the door as she spoke.

In another moment we were both stealing downstairs. The dining-room was not lighted up, and looked very dim.

Biddy was not long in opening the clock, and I crept in carefully, and found that, the works being absent, it just fitted me. Indeed, Biddy was so pleased that she declared that it looked as if it was made for me.

"I hope not!" I whispered, "for it looks horribly like a coffin standing up on end!"

"Whist!—whist! I hear them coming. They will be here in a minute. It's going on for nine. Now if you are tired of standing you can crouch down, but be very careful, and don't make as much noise as a mouse!" with which injunction she shut me up in my very strange quarters and noiselessly stole away.

(To be continued.)

A TRUE REVENGE.

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CHAPTER I.

How gloriously the birds sang in the great chestnuts. How softly and low the ripple of the brook mingled with their sweet notes. How glad, hilariously glad, all nature seemed that spring, with its remembrances of past loveliness and promises of future beauty and joy, was again here!

It was in the middle of spring, when summer flowers peep shyly forth to gaze at their frail spring sisters; and the air, fresh with the last lingering breath of winter, soft and warm with the first balminess of summer, was rich with their odour.

Gabriel Varne, walking with downbent head along the pathway adjoining Wood Lodge, felt a warm thrill of happiness pass through him as he listened to the sweet sounds of newborn life. Surely his love must prosper when everything that breathed, every tree, flower, bud, blossom, even the delicate blades of grass that sprang back with elastic spring as his feet passed over them, were instinct with the great gifts of Life and Hope!

He paused at a high rustic wooden gate, beside which was a rather awkwardly constructed stile, and leaning his arms on the topmost rail, gazed dreamily down the straggling lane to which it gave entrance. The bubbling of the silvery brook still murmured in his ear, and each fresh note of its never-ending song brought renewed hope to his passionate, throbbing heart.

Gabriel Varne's was not a handsome face; nay, it was decidedly plain, with its high nose, thin red lips, and low heavy brows. Strangers seldom liked Gabriel Varne, and few would blame them, looking casually at the dark, satirical face. He stood there for a second or so, and then vaulting lightly over the stile, walked with quick even strides down the narrow lane, with its ditches filled with frail wild flowers on either side.

As he neared the end of the lane another gate faced him; this, constructed of fretted iron, affording a delicious view of a stately avenue of trees, some of which were centuries old. The red blood flushed his face, and his heart beat nearly to suffocation, as he caught sight of the lovely face of a young girl who stood, all unconscious of his approach, beneath the shade of a giant alder.

It was a proud face, and beautiful with the dark glowing beauty of the daughters of the sunny south. She was slightly above the middle height, with a figure moulded in the superb lines of the old heathen goddesses; and the small delicately arched feet carried one's thoughts far away into the broad prairies, where the only sound that fills the air is the guttural cry of the redskin as he rides through the tall waving grass.

"Good morning, Miss Raye!" said Gabriel, quietly pushing open the gate and advancing towards her with outstretched hands.

"Oh, Mr. Varne! You startled me!" she cried, with a careless laugh, but as she gazed fleetingly into those deep, dark eyes, the lines of the poet came to her mind:

"And his eyes were deep and tender,
As a woman's, in the splendour
Of her maidenhood."

Yes, it was his eyes, dark and fathomless, that redeemed Gabriel's plain features; and the smile that broke over the thin swarthy countenance, as he clasped the slender hand, was rare and sweet beyond compare—so calm, so gentle, that it absolutely etherealized the face.

A great peace crept into Una's heart, and a thrill of exquisite joy passed over her. He loved her! Those eyes had told her so, and the proud, passionate woman could have cried aloud in her deep thankfulness that her love had not been given in vain.

"Una!" began Gabriel Varne, in his low

earnest tones, as they paced beneath the great trees that swayed gently in the balmy air, making it musical with their soft whisperings. "Una, I have come here this morning with a purpose, a purpose that, if it succeed, will lighten all my life, and make the world, which has hitherto been merely a place peopled with men and women, an earthly Paradise, a never-ending dream of perfect bliss!"

He paused and stood still beside the narrow bubbling brook, that sparkled and glittered in the sunlight, as it ran swiftly on over the golden sand and shining stones. His face had grown white with emotion, and the hand he held out to her trembled.

"Darling!" he went on, "will you be my wife?" and the brook seemed to take up the burden of his soft, earnest voice. "Darling—darling, will you be my wife?" and then the beautiful girl raised her eyes to his face with such a world of passionate love in their lustrous depths that he had no need for words.

"Oh, Gabriel," she breathed, in love-hushed accents, "I have loved you from the first day that we met. Do you remember?"

"Remember, yes. You were standing in the shade of an acacia, and as our eyes met, my soul went from me, and you have loved me since then," with a gentle downward smile. "I always thought that there was some family arrangement that you and Lord Graydon should marry?"

"Lord Graydon!" echoed the girl scornfully. "He is nothing to me, an idle pleasure-loving lordling. You, Gabriel, are my king, my hero!" and the beautiful velvet soft eyes drooped beneath his earnest-loving gaze.

Neither noticed the presence of a third person, a young and handsome man, with a fair frank, boyishly careless face. He stood some little distance from them, but near enough to hear a few fragments of their conversation, and an angry flush rose to the roots of his bright, curly, golden hair.

"An idle pleasure-loving lordling, forsooth!" he muttered; and then, with a careless shrug of his broad shoulders, he turned away, and Gabriel Varne and Una Raye were once more alone, with the song of the birds filling the air, and the voice of the babbling brook taking up the burthen of their love-story, whispering it in silvery tones to the tiny pebbles and feathery blades of grass that grew at the edge of the narrow fissure which the constant running of the water had made in the hill-side.

They lingered in the park until the sun had risen high over their heads, but the delicate tracery of leaves shielded them from its heat, and they felt only the pleasant languor which intense heat brings, when there is no need for bodily fatigue. A gentle breeze, perfumed with the sweet odour of spring flowers, swept across the hills now and again; and, as they wandered on in the soft spring air, the pale primroses and deep golden cowslips peeped out at them from their emerald beds, and listened in flower-wonder to the ever new tale of youthful love.

Presently they entered a small copse nearer the house, where they came upon beds of violets and fairy-like, frail hare-bells; these, too, seemed to understand the tale, for they nodded and bent as they passed along, filling the air with their subtle scent.

"How lovely these are!" said Una, as she stooped and gathered a bunch of hare-bells. "What a pity they fade so soon! Will you take them and keep them, Gabriel?" She held the delicate blossoms out with a new shy expression on her proud, dark face but Gabriel pushed them from him almost roughly.

"Forgive me, sweet!" he exclaimed quickly, seeing the pained look that leaped to the beautiful eyes, "but do not give me a flower that withers almost as soon as it blooms as an emblem of our love."

"What shall I give you then, Gabriel?" asked the rich, sweet voice, as the flowers fell in a shower on the grass at their feet.

"Give me yourself, dear one! That is all I

desire," he answered, drawing her to him and kissing the red-lipped mouth.

The sound of many voices greeted them as they emerged from the copse and came out on to an immense lawn which led to the great Elizabethan mansion, known as Wood Lodge. Anything less like a lodge can scarcely be imagined. New wings had been added by each successive generation of Rayes, until the original shape of the building was entirely lost; still the effect was picturesque in the extreme, for the new wings had been built by men of taste; and Wood Lodge, as it then stood, was a mansion well worth looking at.

Along the front of the house ran a wide Oriental pavement, over which was a roofing of exquisitely carved stone, supported by straight, massive pillars. On the broad smooth lawn an immense tent had been erected, and it was from thence the voices which had attracted Una's attention had proceeded.

"Here is Una at last!" cried a clear ringing voice as they appeared, and a young girl, with yellow curls hanging below the waist of her pale blue costume, ran out of the tent to meet them. "Good morning, Mr. Varne!" she added, blushing deeply, as she discovered that her cousin was not alone.

"Good morning, Miss Raye! You are looking as bright and happy as the birds in yonder tree!" he replied, bowing politely.

Ianthe Raye frowned, and the ready tears started to her eyes as he spoke those careless words. Why could not men treat women as if they were rational beings, instead of being always craving for compliments?

"Auntie wants you for something, Una;" and she linked her arm in Una's as she turned away, leaving Gabriel Varne standing on the sunlit lawn, with that ugly sneer on his face which made some people hate him.

CHAPTER II.

"The grass must be cut in the five-acre field, or we shall have the boys scampering through it after the butterflies, and spoiling all the good the fine weather has done!"

It was Farmer Gray who spoke, as he stood at the open door of his farm-house, pipe in hand, enjoying a good whiff before starting for the fields, where he toiled from early dawn until sunset.

Perhaps it was not absolutely necessary that Farmer Gray should work quite so hard, but he was one of the old school, who held that a farmer's duty was not only to overlook, but also to work with his own hands. And so, on that fine morning in the waning spring, he stood there in his working clothes, ready to start.

A fine specimen of an Englishman was John Gray, with his strong, sturdy frame, rugged, sun-tanned face, and keen gray eyes, glancing shrewdly out from beneath his shaggy dark brows. No pretence about him—a thorough old-fashioned English farmer.

"Shall you be home to dinner, farmer?" said a thin sharp voice behind him, and he turned to see Bridget, his housekeeper, standing in the hall, or rather kitchen.

"No, Bridget, I shall not," he replied, briefly. "How softly the birds sing!" he murmured under his breath when he was once more alone, "and how sweet the air smells, now that the grass is cut, and yet it could not keep her here!"

And John Gray wiped a tear from his keen old eyes ere he stepped out into the wide, well-swept path that ran down the centre of the piece of ground in front of the house called the flower-garden.

"Ready, master?" called out a cheery voice, as one of the men jumped into the cart, that was to convey them to the scene of their labours; and he, giving a nod, as he climbed up, the cart started off at a good pace for so rough a vehicle.

They passed out at the gateway of the farm yard, down the long white country road, at the same jogging rate; but when they

neared the five-acre field, as it was called, Farmer Gray bade the cart stop, for he distinctly heard the sound of horses' hoofs on the other side of the hedge.

Getting red in the face with rage the farmer scrambled through a gap, and confronted three horse-riders.

"You will pardon us, I hope," began Gabriel Varne, for it was he and the two cousins who had trespassed on Farmer Gray's field.

"Nay, Gabriel, this is my uncle's property," interrupted Una, with a haughty wave of her grey-gauntleted hand. "Why apologise; these people do not understand politeness."

"Madame, you are mistaken," shouted the farmer, exasperated by her arrogant tone. "This field belongs to me by right of the rent I pay your uncle for it, and if I choose I can give you into custody for trespassing!"

Una's proud face flushed, and her red lips quivered with passion at his words.

"Insolent creature!" she exclaimed, "I will have you horsewhipped!"

As John Gray finished speaking his eyes fell upon the superbly beautiful face of the young girl, and a strange yearning came over him—a wild weird feeling he could in no way account for; but he turned away with bowed head, taking no heed even when her insulting words fell upon his ear.

"Oh heaven, how did I fail?" he breathed.

Gabriel Varne stooped, and whispered something into the dainty ear as the old man walked away, and Una glanced after him, laughing as she did so a light mocking laugh that seemed to find a thousand echoes in the surrounding hills.

"Come away quickly, Gabriel; the man looks like a murderer, with those great staring grey eyes. I really do believe that the lower orders are made of different materials to what we are."

Una's lover made no reply, but a look passed over his plain dark face—an expression so swift that it was difficult to tell whether it was one of pleasure or pain.

How could you speak so to an old man like that? "cried Ianthe indignantly, her blue eyes flashing, and the colour deepening in her roseleaf cheeks.

"How dare he speak to his landlady's niece?" replied Una, with a proud uplift of her beautiful head. "Gabriel, was I to blame?"

These last words were almost whispered, and the man's heart throbbed with passionate love, as the low seductive tones fell upon his ear, and the dark eyes glanced straight into his, with a glow of confidence in their dusky depths.

"Nothing my darling does is wrong!" he replied, taking the slender hand in his as he stooped, pretending to be doing something to the bridle.

Ianthe Raye gazed at the two as they sat there, the long grass reaching almost to their horses' chests, the great branches of the trees that skirted the field making a cool, pleasant shade, and her cheeks paled, but her voice was clear and firm as ever when she spoke.

"Come, lazybones, now for a canter along the high road," she cried, brightly.

They passed quietly out at the long, low gate of the field, and Gabriel turned his head in the direction the cart had taken. It was not yet out of sight, and shading his eyes with his hand he looked long and earnestly at the rustic vehicle as it rumbled slowly along.

He could see that the farmer was half sitting and half lying in the bottom of the cart, and the driver—an old and trusted servant of the Grays—was expostulating with him, waving his whip aloft and flicking imaginary flies from the shafts in his excitement.

"What are you thinking about, Gabriel?" asked Una, a little impatiently. "My horse is getting quite restive; are you not, Gaudred?" patting her steed's glossy head.

"He has never recovered since then!" muttered Gabriel, turning his horse's head, and in a few moments the road was empty

again—horses, riders, and rough country cart had disappeared—leaving no trace of the strange scene that had taken place there, save a few ruts and a faint impression of horses' hoofs in the soft, thick dust.

Una recounted their adventure of the morning at dinner, and Sir Arthur Raye replied with an indulgent, though grave, smile,—

"My dear Una, I am afraid that wilful temper of yours will get you into trouble some of these days. You must try and learn to curb it."

"For the sake of a vulgar farmer?" cried the girl.

"Nay, dear child, for your own! And remember, poor old Farmer Gray has had a great deal of trouble, and is not quite accountable for his excitable temper!"

Una made no answer, but she shot a proud, defiant glance at her lover from under her long, black lashes as she commenced peeling a rich, ripe peach.

What was this mysterious trouble that had fallen upon the old farmer? She heard of it on every side; but what its nature had never been whispered.

Was he mad, or had he a mad wife? She would ask Gabriel. He would be sure to know. She found herself thinking of the troubled, rugged face, with its keen, grey eyes, and the strong, sturdy figure more than she would have cared to own. She forgot her annoyance of the morning in conjecturing what this great sorrow of his could be.

"Gabriel!" she said, as her lover entered the drawing-room and crossed to the window where she stood. "What is this great grief that has turned Farmer Gray's brain?"

The drawing-room at Wood Lodge was a large, square, high-ceiled apartment, with six windows, opening on to a long, covered-in terrace. From this terrace the view on a moonlit-night was exquisite, and the moon was shining in solitary brightness as Gabriel, taking a light gauze shawl from a couch, drew the girl out into the still air.

Even when they were alone he did not speak. A spell seemed to be over them both, and they stood in the moonlight silent.

The scene that lay before them was perfect; the garden and fields beyond were bathed in the moon's silvery light, save where the tall trees cast their dark giant shadows on the sleeping earth.

The lake that would soon be beautiful with white and golden lilies lay calm and still, perfectly unchanging, except for the occasional reflection of a tiny fleet of fleecy clouds as they scudded hastily across the dark, clear sky.

Presently from the wood at their right there broke such a flood of liquid melody that the two started, and a rapturous thrill of happiness passed over them. The sound was so in harmony with the night that it seemed part of the lovely, peaceful scene.

The shrill, sweet notes rose and fell and died away only to break forth with greater strength, and Una's thoughts flew far away to the land of the rose and the henna, where the night is as beautiful as the day, with its rich moonlight and sweet, odorous flowers that are odorous only when the Queen of Night is in the sky.

Slowly and lingeringly the notes died away, this time not to rise again; a deathlike stillness reigned as though Nature held her breath in fear of disturbing the tiny songster.

A feeling of disappointment crept into Una's heart, as the bird still remained mute, and then she turned to Gabriel with a softened expression in her lustrous eyes.

"I have not answered your question, Una," he said, meeting that glance.

"No, you have not," she replied, wondering a little at the sneer on his face, the constraining of his tones. "Will you tell me now?"

"Una, it is not a tale for your pure ears to listen to; suffice it to say that Farmer Gray has been wronged by one bearing a name which should have been a safeguard against all evil," he said sternly.

"His wife!"

The words came almost unconsciously from the beautiful lips, but the expression on her lover's face told her that she had guessed aright.

Farmer Gray's sorrow was in some way connected with his wife, but where was this wife? Was she dead?

"Come, darling, tell me something of yourself. Are you sorry that you gave me that sweet promise?"

"Sorry, Gabriel! No!"

How the full rich voice quivered and sank as she pronounced that loved name! How the woman's proud heart throbbed and kept time with the words of the song someone was singing in the room beyond.

And Gabriel leant over the iron balustrade, a far-away tense look on his plain face, the soft symphony mingling with his thoughts in a pleasant musical murmur.

It was a happy evening for Gabriel Varne, standing there in the hush of the moonlight, the only sound the ripple of the music, the only living being near him Una, the love of his life.

His had been a lonely life, in spite of his wealth and apparently numerous friends.

His father died when he was a child in pinafores, and his gentle, golden-haired mother soon followed her husband to the land without night; and when he came of age, and took possession of his ancestral home, he made no friends. Those who came to his house in the different seasons were merely butterfly acquaintances.

But a new element had come into his life now—the love that comes to such men but once. His life would henceforth be devoted to the beautiful woman who stood at his side with that strange new light in her dark, beautiful eyes, the moon's soft rays shining on her glossy black hair and perfect chiselled features.

"Darling!" breathed Gabriel, in hushed accents, "how peaceful the earth looks to-night, and the moon shines upon your pure lovely face as though in benediction!"

"What strange ideas you have, Gabriel," she replied, blushing beneath his earnest gaze; and then the sweet face was hidden from the placid gaze of the Lady of the Night, for Gabriel caught her in his arms and pressed swift, tender, passionate kisses on the perfect, smiling mouth.

"I suppose my long sojourn in Germany has given me some queer notions," he said, looking down at the lovely girl, and that rare sweet smile broke over his face, making her almost cry out at the change it made in him; but it was gone in a moment, and he was only her plain lover, with the great dark eyes relieving his face from the charge of ugliness.

"You young people are enjoying yourselves," said a voice from one of the windows; and Gabriel Varne frowned slightly as Sir Arthur came out to them.

The dreamy hush, the exquisite thrilling happiness of the evening was over, and they must return to the world of realities. Tomorrow there must come the sordid question of settlements and family arrangements.

"The scene was so inviting—"

"Good evening, Miss Una," interrupted a pleasant, ringing voice; and a tall, handsome young fellow with curly golden hair pushed aside the curtain of the window nearest them and joined the two.

"Lord Graydon, I did not know you were here?" she said, hold out one slim, white hand, and smiling up into the frank, boyish face.

"I arrived just as Mr. Bertram commenced singing; and not for worlds would I interrupt him. I would as soon think of stopping the song of the nightingale," replied Lord Graydon, bending over her, with an expression of earnest love in his clear blue eyes.

"Yes; his voice is indeed perfect."

The girl's eyes wandered away over the moonlit landscape, a dreamy light darkening them into intense blackness.

She knew that this man loved her with a

love that would have honoured any woman; this man whom in a fit of proud scorn, she had termed an idle, pleasure-loving lordling; and a little feeling of regret for the title and the prestige it would have given her in the county stole into her heart.

Ah, Gabriel Varne! though the woman's heart loves you, the woman's vanity wanders even now to the advantages of your rival!

"What makes you so silent to-night, Miss Una?" asked Lord Graydon in a low voice, but not too low for Gabriel to hear, for he turned from Sir Arthur Raye with a slight flush on his dark face, and that ugly sneer crept round his mouth as he listened to the girl's reply.

"Am I silent? Well, I suppose it is the effect of the moonlight; it seems almost a pity to break the hush that has succeeded the nightingale's song," said Una quietly, but her heart was beating more quickly than usual, for she had observed the sneer on her lover's face, and her pride rose in hot rebellion. Did he mean that sneer for her? Was it a crime to smile at her uncle's guests?

"Going in, Una?" remarked Sir Arthur, as she stepped quickly forward and raised the curtain that swayed to and fro in the so breeze that swept across the wide stretch country.

"Yes, uncle; I am a little tired," she replied, and then the curtain dropped, and the three men were alone on the terrace.

"I should like a few moments' conversation with you, Sir Arthur," began Gabriel, in a low voice which, for him, was a trifle nervous. Lord Graydon had turned away with the evident intention of joining those in the drawing-room, and Gabriel felt that he could not rest until he had gained Sir Arthur's consent to his engagement with Una.

"My time is at your disposal," returned Sir Arthur, wondering a little what could have disturbed the calm equanimity of grave, taciturn Gabriel Varne, and then a thought struck him which made a pleased smile light up his face and sent a sparkle almost of youth into the keen blue eyes.

Now even that the ice was broken Gabriel felt shy of disclosing his love to the world. It seemed too sacred a thing to be talked of by all the gossips of the village and of society, and a feeling of annoyance came over him that he had not waited. He could see through the fluttering lace curtains into the great room which was literally ablaze with light. Una was standing at Janthe's side conversing in a low tone, and the lovely face looked to him more lovely than ever as she glanced once at the window, while a deep crimson flush swept across her creamy cheeks. She was talking of him; perhaps telling her cousin of their engagement, and this thought made him speak his next words in a firmer, more decided voice.

"I love your niece Una, and wish to ask your permission—"

"Stay, Gabriel Varne," cried Sir Arthur, a cloud of intense disappointment darkening his brow. "Una Raye is not my niece! She is no relation, in spite of the similarity of name. But I always thought," then he checked himself.

"Not your niece!" exclaimed Gabriel in surprise. "But that can make no difference in my love. Will you give your consent, Sir Arthur?"

"Come to meat twelve to-morrow, and then you shall have my answer," replied his companion rather sadly. "Remember, Una has not a penny in the world save the allowance she receives from me."

"Your words grieve me, Sir Arthur," said Gabriel Varne, almost sternly. "My love for Una is too true and earnest for me to think of money!"

"Pardon me, Varne; but you must own that I am right to tell you. Some men might fancy I wanted to—" commenced Una's guardian, the tears starting to his eyes at the other's evident pain.

"I know all that, Sir Arthur," interrupted

Gabriel. "I was too hasty, but I am sure that is forgiven."

And then they went into the drawing-room, which seemed to Gabriel Varne's fancy to have grown strangely dark and lonely, and looking eagerly round he perceived that Una was not there. He fancied that the breeze that came through the open window swept with a little wail round the corners of the spacious apartment, and the song which Ianthe was singing in a rich contralto jarred upon his nerves. And Una? She had gone to her room, feeling annoyed and discontented with the world and herself; the world, because Gabriel had not Lord Graydon's title, herself for having been so easily won.

"Ianthe, where is your cousin?" asked her father, as the girl rose from her seat and joined them, leaving Lord Graydon at the piano talking to Miss Isabel Weir, an old maiden cousin of Sir Arthur's, who did the honours of his house for him now his wife was dead.

"She has gone to her room, papa. She felt tired, and begged to be excused," with a little shy inclination of the golden head to Gabriel.

Gabriel gazed at the fair girl as she stood shyly, yet full of grace before him, the golden hair glittering like fairy threads in the strong light; the bright deep blue eyes, the fair shell-pink complexion and dainty slender form, all made up a picture of exquisite beauty, and a nameless something whispered him that all this loveliness might be his own to love and cherish had he so wished. Ianthe was too child-like and innocent to be able to hide her love, and Gabriel breathed a soul-felt wish that she would soon learn to forget one who was not worthy of her love. Yes, he owned, even in the first flush of his love that he had chosen the more worldly of the two women who loved him, but he did not regret his choice. Una, with her proud dark imperious beauty, had won the worship of his soul. Ianthe's ethereal loveliness filled his heart with a tender, gentle affection that never could blossom into the passionate flower of love.

"Then I think I will say good-night," said Gabriel, holding out his hand to Ianthe.

"Good-night, Mr. Varne," she echoed, in that pretty girlish voice that was one of her greatest charms, and a dainty sea-pink flush rose to the fair face as her fingers rested for a moment in his firm white hand—a flush that made the fond father's heart grow sad for his motherless darling.

Then Lord Graydon bade them good-night, and the rivals left the house together.

The long, crooked shadows cast by the tall trees on to the wide cool green lawn at Wood Lodge had commenced to slant when Gabriel Varne was seen walking slowly along the path that skirted the lawn.

The day had begun with a white heat mist, which the sun had gradually sucked up, leaving the earth hard and dry.

The fragile flowers hung their heads, the birds twittered sleepily from their shelter in the thick leaved branches of the great trees, and the lowing of cattle in the fields beyond came in a subdued murmur across the drowsy earth.

The low soft cooing of the doves in the dove-cots at the side of the house, and the occasional bark of a dog, told that there was some life about, but there was no other sign; the blinds were all drawn, and no voice came to disturb him as he walked slowly, almost laggingly, along.

He was lost in a labyrinth of wondering thoughts, and his face, usually kept under such control, save for that ugly sneer, betrayed this.

What was the meaning of Sir Arthur's strange behaviour? Why had he given out to all the world that Una was his niece? But it was foolish to vex himself with vain conjecture. He would be with Sir Arthur in a few minutes, and then the mystery would be explained.

As he crossed the great hall on his way to

the library he met Una coming down the broad oaken staircase with a bunch of delicate roses in her white hands.

She was dressed in a pale blue cambric robe, with masses of creamy lace about it, and nestling among the dark luxuriant coils of glossy hair was a lovely blossom from the bouquet she held so tenderly.

"Darling!" he whispered, going quickly forward, and clasping the slender fingers in his strong hand. "You like my flowers?"

"They are exquisite!" she replied, lifting her eyes to his face; and he longed, as he bent over her, inhaling the intoxicating perfume of the flowers, to clasp her in his arms, to press one kiss on the lovely mouth that smiled so sweetly at him; but there were servants about, and he was fain to quell his passion.

"Is your uncle—is Sir Arthur in the library?" he asked.

"Yes; are you seeking him? I will tell him you are here," said Una, quickly; yet she felt a little sinking at her heart in spite of the love, even great love, she had for Gabriel, a little longing for the title her boy-lover could give her.

Of course her uncle would give his consent, and then it would be beyond recall. Still she did not seek to detain him, but, holding the door open, called out in her full, rich voice,—

"Uncle, here is Mr. Varne come to see you!"

"Come in," cried Sir Arthur, rising from his seat by the window; and Una, with a slight inclination of her head in acknowledgment of Gabriel's bow, passed out of the room, and Sir Arthur closed the door.

CHAPTER III.

"WHAT a long time Uncle Arthur has taken to answer yes or no, Ianthe!" said Una, impatiently digging up the long, soft grass with the tip of her parasol.

The two girls were seated in a shady nook near the water's edge. It was a little bower situated on a grassy knoll, and surrounded by lilac bushes and rose trees. Flowers had been planted in the inner ring from time to time, until it had become a perfect fairy bower. Stray beams of golden light glinted in through the thick boughs, and sometimes, as the gentle breeze blew the leaves apart, a broad shaft would glance athwart their heads, but even on the hottest day shelter was to be found in this secluded spot.

Ianthe looked up into Una's dark face, a look of surprise in her great blue eyes. She turned aside to pluck a rich red Queen Marguerite rose, and so Una did not see the pallor that followed the swift flush that rose to her face as she took in the full meaning of Una's words.

"You forget, Una," she replied, burying the tips of her fingers in the heart of the rose, thus scenting the air with its spicy perfume, "there are other things to be talked of besides the yes and the no."

Una gave a little sigh, and pouted her full red lips, but she did not answer. She would have been ashamed to have told the thoughts that flashed through her mind, for she knew well that Ianthe's innocent childlike heart would have revolted against her passion for wealth, title, and its attendant pomp and glitter.

They sat for some time in perfect silence after that.

The soft morning air stole into the bower, laden with the scent of countless fragrant blossoms, and the river rippled by with a pleasant plashing murmur, that mingled harmoniously with the shrill sweet song of a lark as it soared up in the blue sky above their heads.

After a time the dreamy hush was broken by the sound of footsteps, and Una rose from the grass with an expectant flush on her proud face, and a softening of the proud dark eyes. The woman's heart was beating with love then.

The woman's vanity was forgotten. Ianthe rose also, pale and trembling. She longed to make her escape, but did not know in her helpless childishness how to frame an excuse.

"Lord Graydon!" said Una, almost coldly, and Ianthe breathed a deep sigh of relief.

"Miss Weir sent me to you," said Lord Graydon, in an apologetic tone, as he shook hands with the two girls. "I hope you will pardon me for this intrusion." He did not release Una's hand, but gazed straight into the dark eyes with such a look of passionate love in his own, that the white lids drooped till the long heavy lashes swept the flushing cheek.

He could see the quick heaving of her bosom beneath her blue bodice, and a thrill of hope crept into his heart. How was he to know that her emotion was caused by her love for Gabriel—that it was only his title she coveted?

"I am glad you have come, my lord," she said, smiling, "for I was just getting tired of my own company. Oh!" she added in answer to his glance in Ianthe's direction, "Ianthe always indulges in day-dreams. I think she must be in love, although she always denies it when—"

"Una," cried Ianthe, glancing indignantly at the lovely, careless face, "how can you speak so to Lord Graydon?"

Lord Graydon's boyish face flushed. Instinct told him that there was some truth in Una's bantering words, and he guessed also for whom the innocent heart ached.

"Will you come for a little walk?" he said, raising his hat, thus letting the cool breeze play through his sunny curls. "It is charming down by the bend of the river."

A haughty, cruel smile quivered round the weak, red mouth, and she raised her dark proud head, with a little defiant gesture. Yes, she would go for a walk with Lord Graydon, and when Gabriel came to seek his bird he would find the nest empty. And so the three left the bower, with its roses and delicate subtle-smelling flowers, to nod in the sunshine to one another, as the bees buzzed from blossom to blossom.

They strolled along under the shade of the giant alders, laughing and talking gaily, the ferns that grew on the river's bank sending up a fresh sweet smell as their feet now and again crushed a long straggling frond. They paused when they reached the bend of the river, where a great willow swept its long branches far into the water, making a cool shelter for the fish that darted in and out amongst the tangled masses of water-weed. It was a beautiful spot—the fairest on the river, which was very wide at this point. The water glistened and sparkled in the warm, golden sunlight, and its musical plash fell with a cool refreshing sound upon the ear.

"Here is Gabriel!" cried Ianthe suddenly, unconsciously using his Christian name. Una turned quickly, and, in spite of herself, a startled look leaped to her eyes. What would he say? What would he think of her utter disregard of his wishes?

Gabriel's face looked plainer than ever as he came up to them. There was no swift smile, no tenderness in those dark eyes, and Una glanced at the two men who loved her—the one so full of manly beauty and fair debonaire youth, the other dark, stern, perfect of form and with the air of a Spanish Don, but plain beyond denial.

"You are an early visitor, my lord?" said Gabriel, formally, that ugly sneer curling the thin red mouth which the small, well-kept black moustache did not hide.

"And you also, it would appear," replied Lord Graydon, flicking the frond of a stately fern from its stem with his cane, and looking haughtily into the dark, emotionless face of his rival.

"Shall we go and find papa," said Ianthe, seeing the angry flash in the young fellow's blue eyes, and fearing an open quarrel. She knew that there was no love lost between them, but that did not matter if they kept it to themselves. Gabriel, without a word, took

Una's hand and placed it on his arm, leaving Ianthe with George Hamilton.

"Una," said Gabriel, suddenly, and in a constrained voice, "why did you break your promise? Why did you not wait?"

"I thought you had forgotten, and had gone for a ride with my uncle," she answered carelessly, plucking the petals from the rare rose she had placed at her throat, and scattering them on the ground.

"Do not play with me, Una!" he cried, the red blood flushing his cheek. "Much as I love you, I will not bear that!" and he clasped her hand as she tried to draw it from him, almost hurting her in his sudden passion.

"Really your conduct is very strange, to use no stronger term," replied Una, drawing her superb figure to its proud height, as she paused and faced him in the warm-scented air. She loved him, but there was something of the panther in the nature of this beautiful woman, and she loved to try her power, to see the effect her words of scorn would have upon him and know that it was her doing.

"Sweet, I am jealous of every glance you bestow upon another. Forgive me."

And Una felt, as she saw that rarely beautiful smile creep over the plain face, that she could have nestled in his strong arms, and whispered her forgiveness on his breast, but Ianthe and Lord Graydon were watching them, so she held out her hand with a swift glance from her passionate dark eyes that told him his plea was not in vain.

Gabriel Varne, take your fill of love while the flower is in its bud; the full-blown blossom too often conceals a canker in its beauteous leaves.

(To be continued.)

DECORATIVE AND OTHER NOTES.

A PRETTY way of making baby blankets is to have the edges crenelated instead of scalloped. Delicate torchon lace finishes the edges.

A cradle afghan is made up of alternate stripes of three inch wide blue satin ribbon and guipure insertion. Marguerites are applied on the satin stripes. Wide guipure lace corresponding to the insertion edges the dainty cover.

Hot chamomile bags often give relief to sufferers from neuralgia. They are made of linen, lightly filled with chamomile blossoms; reject the stalks. When needed, place them on a tin plate in the oven, where they will become very hot but not burn.

To make a pretty whisk-broom holder, cover the pasteboard case smoothly with ailesia and edge the top and bottom with cord. Drape a bright scarf edged with sequins gracefully on the outer side, so that none of the case shall be visible, and suspend by cord or ribbon. The ailesia should be of the colour of the scarf.

A notable housekeeper says that stockings that have served their purpose and are not serviceable for poor persons are useful for iron-holders. They should be cut down the seam and smoothly folded, with the foot inside. The edges should be firmly overcast with strong linen thread. Slip covers for iron-holders are admirable. They may be of stout grey linen in a bag shape. They are slipped over the iron-holder and tacked at the open end.

Odds and ends of wool may be utilized with pretty effect for afghans. The bits of wool are knotted together according to fancy, the ends being left about an inch in length. They are crocheted together with a coarse needle in plain stitch. The knots must be kept on one side, so the longer pieces of wool should be used for the return row for the upper side. If, however, all the bits are small, it is a simple matter to draw the knots through to the other side. The ends of the wool have a messy look, and the varied colours have a cheerful effect.

VERNON'S DESTINY.

—30—

CHAPTER XII.

LADY DECIMA VERNON rejoiced with an intense gladness when she read in the paper of Nell Charteris's marriage. There are some women (and alas! so numerous a class that we all must have met one or two in our life's journey), who, good and kind to all those near and dear to them, can yet rejoice in a calamity which does not touch them or theirs.

Guy Vernon's mother knew well enough from her son's description that Captain Denzil was a man little fitted to make a woman happy; that the strongest feeling of his nature was a guilty love for Mrs. Merton.

She had seen Helen Charteris, and knew that she was a pure, innocent girl, with a tender heart, and almost ultra-sensitive nature; and yet this lady, whom her little world considered a pattern of all virtues, rejoiced when she read that the motherless, fatherless child, whom, in spite of herself, she had pitied, was bound for life to a man so utterly degraded that most of Belgravia's matrons had closed their doors against him.

"Safe!" said the Lady Decima, when on a bleak January morning, she read that Helen Charteris had given her fair young life to Reginald Denzil's keeping. "She can never injure my boy now. A chivalrous pity would have made him interest himself about her, and if they had become intimate, he must have guessed what I know already. Well, there is no fear of that now. Guy will have nothing but contempt for Mrs. Reginald Denzil!"

And my lady put her elegant slippered feet on the fender to enjoy the warmth of the bright fire, and sipped her coffee with extreme enjoyment. No thrill of pity touched her for the young life wrecked by a moment's folly. She never even cast a thought to the future of the girl who had never wronged her, unless indeed, it was by presuming to exist!

But the Lady Decima was not to have only cause for rejoicing. Very soon came the news of the accident, written by Dr. Charteris himself, and begging her, for her son's own sake, not to come to the Hall, but to leave him to the care of those who were already nursing him.

"It is clear to me," wrote the kind physician, "that Sir Guy has had some terrible shock and anxiety apart from the accident. His chance of recovery is far better with strangers than with anyone who could recall, however indirectly, his state of mind before the collision. My son was his college friend, my daughter is a better nurse than many hospital 'Sisters'; believe me, you had better leave him in our hands. If there should be dangerous symptoms, or he should ask for you, I promise to telegraph at once."

Lady Decima had just prudence enough to see the wisdom of the doctor's wishes. She loved her boy with a devotion that was the master-passion of her life, and so she denied herself the pleasure of going to his sick bed, and waited with as much patience as she could for the time when he was sufficiently recovered to return to her.

Just as she sat awaiting him before Christmas did she take up her position once more, now as then. At the first sound of the carriage wheels she hurried into the hall to greet him, but there was a difference she felt no illness alone could have made. Sir Guy looked as though he was years older than when they parted—graver, sterner, with a nameless something gone out of his face. Even the mother who bore him trembled as she gazed at the handsome features.

"Guy, I am so thankful you are here, my dear! Time has been one long suspense to me since I heard of the accident."

Sir Guy looked as though he would gladly dispense with her remarks. He went upstairs to change his clothes; and coming down in

faultless evening dress took the head of the dinner table as calmly as though he had not been away for weeks, and hovered for some of them between life and death.

Lady Decima was half frightened in spite of herself. This deep gravity, this strange reserve, seemed to her positive cruelty when they had been parted for so long, and he had been given back to her, as it were, from the jaws of death.

"I shall never have an hour's peace now, Guy, when you are away from me."

"I am sorry for that, mother; because as soon as I am quite restored I mean to start on a long journey."

"My dear!" Then, with a strange pleading in her voice which was very touching, coming from one usually so stately and dignified, she asked, "Couldn't you take me with you, Guy? I would try not to be nervous or get into your way; but, oh! my dear, if you go roaming about alone again I shall never have a minute's comfort."

Sir Guy smiled faintly. He was a good son, and though the very heart within his breast ached with sorrow, he could pity his mother's anxiety.

"My dear old lady," using the name he had given her so long ago that the term of 'old lady' was so inappropriate as to show it was used merely in endearment. "My dear old lady, you don't know what you ask—you would be wretched!"

"When are you going, Guy?"

"I have not the faintest idea."

"We might plan out a very nice tour. We could go to Paris for Easter and then push on," suggested Lady Decima, whose ideas of foreign travel were of the vaguest.

"But I am not going for pleasure this time, mother. I am tired of roaming and it is only a solemn duty takes me from home."

Lady Decima stared at him. She began to fear the accident had in some way affected his brain. What duty could he possibly have, save to her his mother. What could make it seem to him his duty to go abroad?

"I don't understand," she said fretfully. "You say it is your duty to go abroad, and yet you declare you have not the faintest idea where you are going. I can't reconcile the two statements at all, Guy."

"You have changed then somewhat, mother. I said I was going on a long journey, and that it was my duty to go. I don't think I ever mentioned the word 'abroad.'"

"It is very hard," and Lady Decima was not far from tears. "Why can't I go with you, instead of being wretched here?"

"I never thought you were wretched here, mother. I believed you loved the Grange dearly!"

"Isn't it natural I should love the place which was your dear father's, and is now yours?"

"Gently, mother. I don't think my father ever felt this place to be his. As for me, from the day I was old enough to understand the miserable story, I have longed to hand over the place to its rightful owner. I have waited, hoping, poor creature, she might come back of her own accord; and because—coward that I am—I shrank from awaking any scandal along our name; but my mind is made up now. As soon as I have regained my old strength I leave Vernon Grange to return to it no more until I can bring my unhappy cousin home to rule as its mistress, or have proof positive that she is dead, and has left no child to inherit her claim."

"Guy, this is madness!"

"Mother," asked the young man, gravely, "has the Grange brought any happiness to those who occupied it?" Then, as she shivered beneath his glance, his voice softened "Can we not trace back my father's premature death to his unjust possession of this grand old place?"

"I don't know what you call injustice, Guy," cried Lady Decima, indignantly. "I'm sure your uncle's daughter behaved abomin-

ably, and he made a will, and left the property to your father."

"But there are grave doubts in point of law whether he could disinherit his daughter. Apart from that, on his death-bed, he repented his rashness; his one cry was for his child. He prayed those about him to see her righted. Mother, you know that death-bed promise was broken. I ask you, what good our unjust gains have done us?"

Lady Decima was discomfited.

"The Grange is yours in point of law, Guy. The entail was cut off years ago. As for that old rumour, that it was revived, that is nonsense. I should like to see who could prove it."

"And the promise given to my great uncle on his death-bed. How about that, mother?"

"Sick people's whims must be humoured," said the Lady Decima, irritably; "besides, Magdalen has never been heard of since. Of course she must be dead. Why, she would be turned fifty now!"

"I think you are nearly her age, mother, but it has not followed, as a matter of course, that you are dead."

"She had forfeited all claim to be considered. She had brought disgrace upon her name."

"I don't know," said Guy, passing one hand across his forehead, as though a sudden thought had pained him. "Of course I have only hearsay to go on. She was young and beautiful; she was neglected, and left entirely alone. A young artist came across her path, and fascinated by her charms made love to her. His was the only affection she had ever known, and the poor girl preferred it to her magnificent desolation. She left the home where she had only been thought a nuisance, and married the man of her choice."

"Who already had a wife living."

"That has never been proved. If the woman who came to my uncle and protested she was Clifford's wife had really been so, don't you think she would have pursued her husband and her rival? In my belief, it was just a trumped-up story to obtain money from my great uncle."

"If Magdalen had been Mrs Clifford," retorted Lady Decima, "she would have had nothing to be ashamed of, and would surely have put in her claim to Vernon Grange on her father's death."

Guy sighed.

"There is no convincing you, mother; but I tell you my mind is made up. I will not have this remorse eating like a canker into my life; the fraud has done me harm enough already."

Lady Decima looked amazed.

"Harm! Why, your career has been one long triumph; you were the most successful man of your day at Elsford. Whatever you touch prospers, and if you would but give up your quixotic notions, and settle down quietly at home, you might be the happiest man in the county."

Guy smiled half scornfully.

"I tell you, mother, this inheritance has been my curse; but for it I should have followed some profession on leaving college, and long before this have made an honourable competence. But for this false position I might be a contented married man, but I have had to flee all thoughts of love and marriage. How could I marry, as the seeming owner of Vernon Grange and its thousands, knowing in my heart I possessed nothing but my father's modest fortune."

"Four hundred a year!" said Lady Decima, thoughtfully. "I see now why you have always been so economical, Guy."

"Ay! As for you, mother, you have your jointure and your own portion. Even if Mrs. Clifford appeared to-morrow you would have ample to maintain you according to your rank."

"And nothing will convince you, Guy?"

"Nothing."

"You are blighting all your prospects."

"My prospects have been blighted already."

The only ambition left me is to be able to stand erect and face the whole world, knowing I am no longer a fraud and a deception, but honestly what I seem."

Lady Decima groaned.

"And when shall you start off on your wild-goose chase, for that's what I consider it, Guy?"

"Not till after Easter. There will be a good deal of business to arrange, for I am quite resolved not to return until I have accomplished my object."

"You will write to me sometimes, Guy?"

"Of course I will, mother. My headquarters will be London at the first. I must find the certificate of Magdalen Vernon's marriage before I can stir in the matter."

"Perhaps she never was married?"

Guy looked at his mother sternly. There were times when, fond and affectionate parent that she was, she yet tried him terribly.

"I know from family papers," he said, slowly, "that she was married! The ceremony may have been illegal, but it certainly took place. I have seen a letter of hers signed Magdalen Clifford, and she would not be likely to use that name unless she believed it her own."

"A letter of hers, Guy? When I did not know she ever wrote to her father."

"She may have written many times. I don't know, but this special letter must have come to the Grange while her father was stricken with the illness from which he never recovered. Its seal was unbroken—you and my father best know who suppressed it."

Lady Decima was speechless.

It was so long ago, she had almost forgotten the little episode. There are some things, reader, which it is most convenient for us to forget.

"I found it only to-day," said Sir Guy. "I went into the room that was my father's, and took his desk into my study, meaning to use it as my own. In one of the compartments was the letter I have mentioned—its ink brown with age, the paper discoloured. I am glad the seal was unbroken. I can't be very proud of my parents' doings about that time; but, mother, I don't think I could forgive you till my dying day if I knew you had read that letter, and disregarded its piteous appeal!"

Lady Decima smiled.

"Was she in such distress?"

"I can repeat her letter by heart, it was so short, so terribly sad—"

"Father, forgive me! I may have sinned, but I have been sorely punished. Oh! write one line if you cannot come to me. Just say I may come back to you, for my misery is greater than I can bear.—Your sorrowing child, MAGDALEN CLIFFORD."

"She must have been ill when she wrote that," said Lady Decima, with whom, as with many other people, the wish was often father to the thought. "I daresay she died, poor thing; and you will find that you have been worrying yourself for nothing all these years."

"If she had been ill would she have offered to come to him? Had she been ill would she have contemplated a lonely journey from London to Chesham? Besides, poor creature, do you suppose she would have written 'her misery was greater than she could bear,' if there had been the hope of death coming to end her woe?"

"Well, I give up all hope of persuading you! You will go your own way!"

"I certainly shall!"

"And if I die of loneliness and neglect you won't care, so that you succeed in your Utopian schemes!"

"I don't think, mother, your suggestion is at all a possible contingency. You have been without my company for years together before!"

"I had society then!"

"You can have society now!"

"But this affair at Merton Park has cast quite a gloom over the neighbourhood. It

was a nine days' wonder. Now people can only regret the dulness caused by having the pleasantest house in the county shut up!"

"Which house?"

"Merton Park!"

"Is it shut up?"

"My dear Guy, I forgot you had been away so long! Perhaps you have never heard all that went on? First, that Miss Charteris you brought here eloped with Mrs. Merton's brother. But he must have repented, for just two days later I read in the paper that she had married that very Reginald Denzil you used to think so badly of!"

Sir Guy bit his lip till the blood almost came, but he gave no other sign of impatience, and Lady Decima went on.

"Then the Major found he had business abroad, and rushed off no one quite knows where; and as of course his poor little wife could not be buried alive in the country with him, he had taken a pretty bijou villa in Mayfair, and the Park is shut up entirely!"

"His poor little wife! Good heavens, mother! Don't you know the woman's true character even yet?"

"I know you never liked her, but—"

"I simply loathe her! Listen! and call her 'poor' afterwards if you like. She was engaged to Denzil, and whatever heart either of them had was in the affair. Married they might have had a chance of respectability. Well, she jilted him and married the Major. He went downhill pretty fast; and at last, when every decent house was closed against him, she introduced him as her brother, and brought him here as her husband's guest!"

"Guy, do you mean that the Reginald Travers I knew was—"

"Reginald Denzil, one of the greatest scoundrels unhung! Well, they threw him in the way of Miss Charteris. I suppose Mrs. Merton knew her husband would make inquiries if he were consulted, so there was an elopement!"

"But you said Captain Denzil cared for Mrs. Merton!"

"As much as he would care for anyone."

"Then why did he marry Miss Charteris?"

Guy sighed.

"She was rich and he was poor. Then, poor child, she was quite artless, and had not a suspicion of the truth. Denzil was a very handsome fellow, and I daresay, believing him to be Mr. Travers, she fancied herself in love with him."

Lady Decima felt one honest pang of pity; then she remembered all that hung upon Nell's not crossing her son's path, and could even rejoice at the girl's misery if it kept her away from Guy.

"Where are they now?" asked Guy, tersely.

"As the county is so fond of gossip, no doubt you have heard."

"It was before Nell had become the heiress of the Charteris, and very little had been rumoured about her."

"People say they are in London. Did Lord Charteris never mention his grandchild?"

"Never."

"I suppose they will never acknowledge Mrs. Denzil as a relation."

"The old lord knew Nell. His son, Dr. Charteris, one of the best men I ever met, seems to take a great interest in her. It is a beautiful place, mother—the Hall I mean; and I never met a family who made one feel so thoroughly at home. As for Miss Charteris, it did one good only to look at her."

"She was so pretty!"

"She was so true. I think she and Miss Travers (Mrs. Merton's sister, who was travelling with me at the time of the accident) are two of the truest women I have ever met."

Lady Decima brightened.

"It is the very first time, Guy, I ever heard you express interest in young ladies. Which of the two did you like best?"

"Oh, mother! and Guy smiled, in spite of

his load of care, "what a match-maker you are! Miss Charteris will never marry anyone; she is a sister of mercy—a family prop; and Lena Travers and Neil Charteris fell in love at first sight, or I am much mistaken."

Sir Guy kept his word. He made no attempt to leave the Grange till Easter had come and gone. Lord Charteris was dead long ago by this time, and it was common property that Helen Denzil was his heiress. Neil, who had kept up a desultory correspondence with Sir Guy, wrote to announce his own engagement and the future plans of his family. Guy wrote back, to ask if the Denzils would take up their abode at the Hall, and received a note from Meg, saying that nothing was known of their plans. Her father and Neil had had some business interview with Mrs. Denzil; she was then in Devonshire, but gave them not the slightest hint whether she intended to remain there.

"Mother," said Sir Guy, one bright May-day, "the time has come. I start this morning on what you term my wild-goose chase. Nothing can change my purpose. Won't you let me have your good wishes to carry with me?"

"Today! Surely you will not leave me without any warning?"

"You had the warning months ago, mother. I told you after Easter."

"There is nothing ready."

"My portmanteau is packed. I require very little luggage; it would only be in my way; and as my movements are so uncertain, I have taken rooms in Cecil-street. The Strand is very central, and I can vacate them at a week's notice if my search takes me out of town."

"I think you are mad."

"You have told me that before, mother. You know I come of an obstinate race, whose word is their bond, who never swerve from a purpose they have undertaken. I shall never see the Grange again until I have solved the mystery of my cousin's fate. It may be years before we meet again. Are we to part in anger, mother?"

She softened at that. For one moment she longed to tell him all she knew. It was in her power to make his search mere child's play, to place in his hands the knowledge he most desired; and for one moment she almost yielded to the impulse to do this. Then she remembered all he would lose, and was firm again in her purpose.

"Good-bye mother; and, remember, if I am ill I shall expect you to come rushing up to town and to take up your quarters with me. Don't look so sad because we differ on one point. We need not quarrel, you know!"

"I feel as if I were losing you for ever!" sobbed the Lady Decima.

"Nonsense! Come, cheer up, and promise to write me all the news."

He kissed her once more, then he passed out to the waiting carriage. He never said so, but Lady Decima knew perfectly that it was probably the last time he ever entered that carriage as his own. Guy Vernon was not a man to do things by halves. If he discovered Magdalen or any child of hers he would give up all that had come to him from his father—all, every jot and tittle.

As for Guy, he was in better spirits than he had been for months. Instead of folding his hands passively, and giving himself up to the grief eating into his heart, he would now be up and doing. He had taken the first step in the righting of the wrong, which, though none of his doing, had yet caused him such intolerable remorse, and that in itself was comfort.

He had taken the rooms in Cecil-street by letter, but he knew them well, having often visited a friend who had occupied them; his own income was, as his mother had said, four hundred, and he made no small addition to it by means of the paper at whose office Lena had met him.

So there seemed no desperate need for economy, but Guy foresaw the search for his cousin might entail considerable expense, and therefore made up his mind to be careful. He

would live as a gentleman, he would accept occasional invitations from old friends, frequent his club, and go sometimes to the play.

But as to plunging into all the gaieties of the season, as to giving champagne lunches and after opera suppers, it never entered his head. He was no anchorite, he had no wish to keep aloof from his friends. So that their society did not rob him of the time he must devote to his search, and of the hours engaged in literary work, he was quite ready to enjoy it.

He had decided, before he took any other step in the matter, to go straight to the lodgings whence his cousin's piteous little letter was dated. There was very little hope it would be in the occupation of the same people, and still less that they would remember anything of a girl who lodged with them more than twenty years ago; but still there was just the forlorn chance he might obtain some clue, however vague.

The house was in South London, in a district which has changed less than most in the last thirty years—Kennington—having been bricks and mortar when other places were rural. It presents no alteration now, when the fields of Dalwich and Tooting, being transformed into shops and houses, have changed the last spots almost beyond recognition.

As Sir Guy walked down the long, straight road, he felt sure it must have presented much the same appearance when poor Magdalen Clifford wandered down it to post her plaintive appeal. The houses, grim but substantial, had probably been as dingy then, and the frequent cards of "apartments to let" showed that Pelton-street had not changed its chief profession in the course of years.

No. 44 was a corner house, and looked a trifle better than the others—that is to say, the paint was a little fresher, and there were some feeble crochets making a weak attempt to poke their heads above ground.

Guy was encouraged by these signs to hope he might at least meet with civility from the occupants, for it is rarely that people who make the most of their home's appearance are quite lost to the little courtesies of life.

He rang the bell with quite relieved sentiments. A buxom, motherly-looking woman appeared, she looked at Guy rather inquisitively, but there was nothing rude in her scrutiny.

"What did you please to want, sir?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, and he raised his hat as politely as though she had been a duchess, "but I am very anxious to make some inquiries about a relative of mine who once lived in this house."

"Well, sir, I'm ready to tell you all I can. I came home to this house when I married twenty years ago, and I don't think I've been away from it a month at a time since. You just come in, sir, and let's hear what you want to know."

It seemed to Guy his difficulties were ended; he followed Mrs. Pink into a neat parlour and accepted a seat.

"It is a long time ago—two-and-twenty years."

Mrs. Pink made a rapid calculation and ticked off the date of the year; then she inquired the month.

"June."

"Bless me, sir, then it's easy enough. My husband he was a rare man for business. He used to keep a big kind of office diary, and every lodger that ever came to us he entered in it—the year they came, and the very day; then their rents put down every Monday; and, finally, a big red line drawn at the day they went away. Bless you, sir, he's been dead these ten years, and I've followed his way, and every lodger that's ever slept here is down in my books. I was a bit afraid you didn't know the date, and it might be kind of trying to look through many years, seeing Pink he wrote a very small hand, but as you know the month and year, I'll tell you if the party lived here in a jiffy!"

"I am pretty sure she lived here, Mrs.

Pink. What I wanted was to know something about her."

"You must have been a mere child at the time, sir?"

"I was," thinking it best to be confidential. "But Mrs. Pink, there is some property in question which belongs to my relative if she is alive, and reverts to me if she died childless. Unless I can clear up the point I don't know whether I am a rich man or a poor one."

The landlady was delighted at being trusted. She was Guy's faithful assistant from that moment.

"I daresay the name'll help me to remember, sir, though we've had so many lodgers I'd have forgotten the names of some of 'em without my books."

"I don't think you will have forgotten this one. She was young and very pretty; she would be in great trouble."

Mrs. Pink laid her plump hand on Sir Guy's arm in unconscious familiarity, so great was her interest.

"You must mean Mrs. Clifford, sir. To think of that! All these years I've wondered what became of her, the poor, pretty young creature."

"I do. I am seeking my cousin, Magdalen Vernon, and I have every reason to think she married Douglas Clifford, a young artist, as she left her home in his company, and bore his name."

Mrs. Pink wiped her eyes.

"I can't help it, sir," she said apologetically. "Its years and years ago, and yet whenever I think of her I must cry!"

"Will you tell me all you know of her?"

"It isn't much, sir. I know Mr. Clifford was a gentleman though certainly his ma and and sisters weren't much—the commonest, vulgarest women I ever see."

"But what had they to do with my cousin?" asked Guy.

"I'm coming to that, sir. Mr. and Mrs. Clifford came to me in November, and I could see just what they were—gentlefolks down on their luck. I took a fancy to 'em both. He might have been a bad man; but then, when I see his family I made allowances, and certain Mrs. Clifford—I always call her so—was the sweetest young creature I ever saw."

"Please tell me all you can."

"She came in November and took my parlours. He was out teaching all day long, but he never knew how to make enough of her when he came home; he just worshipped her, he did."

"And she?"

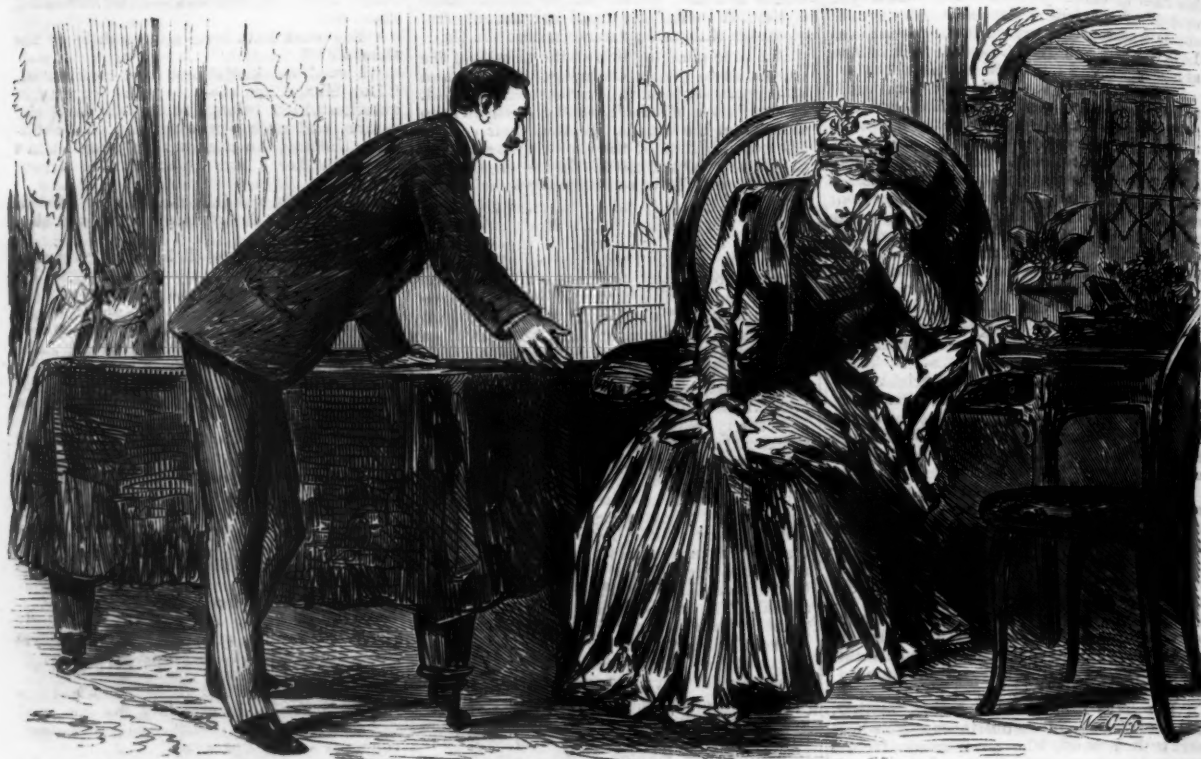
"Bless me, sir! She was as happy as she could be; never a single letter came for either of 'em, never a creature called to see 'em. I don't suppose they had much more than two pounds a week to spend when the rent was paid, and yet they were as happy as a king and queen. Only one thing struck me—he'd never let her go out alone and he gave me the most positive orders no one was ever to see her while he was out. It puzzled me at the time, but I understood it soon enough."

Which was more than Sir Guy did; every moment he was getting more hopelessly bewildered.

"In the spring," went on Mrs. Pink equably, "there came a baby. I suppose it couldn't help it, poor lamb, but it brought only misery with it. First it died, then its funeral and the doctor and that all came to so much money they got into debt, and it seemed as if from that moment bad luck set in."

"I suppose Mr. Clifford tired of her?"

"That he didn't, sir. He loved her better, not less; but he caught cold in the east wind and was laid up with rheumatic fever. Then she sold everything, bit by bit, to get him food and medicine. I'd have helped her gladly, sir, for my husband was well-to-do, and we'd not have missed it, but all she'd ever take of me was letting of the rent run on. When I've nothing left, rather than let him starve I'll borrow of you," she said. Well, one day I made bold and asked her hadn't they no



[“I SHALL NEVER SEE THE GRANGE AGAIN TILL I HAVE SOLVED THE MYSTERY OF MY COUSIN’S FATE.”]

relations? She said yes, and she’d written to her pa over and over again, but he never came. Then I asked her about Mr. Clifford’s family, but she just shook her head and said she knew nothing.

“At last, when she’d sold pretty well all she had, she thought she’d better pawn his ring than let him starve; and, somehow, there was a difficulty, and so she sold it outright to a cousin of mine, who’s in a jeweller’s in Bond-street. And it was that ring that brought the mischief.

“It seems his ma, Mrs. Lumsden—for she’d been married since, and Mr. Clifford was the only child of her first husband—saw the ring in the shop-window, and then she went in and cross-questioned them till she found out where it came from. Then she rushed down here with two daughters as tragic and stuck-up as herself, and another woman, who makes my blood boil now when I think of her—a red-nosed virago, with cork-screw ringlets, and a look about her as though she drank—I expect she did!”

“Well?” asked Guy, when she stopped to take breath. “Mrs. Pink, do go on.”

“I wasn’t well, sir, and you’re not to think ill of your poor young cousin, for the fault was none of hers; and the moment I set eyes on that red-nosed woman I forgave Mr. Clifford everything.”

“But I don’t understand—”

“It’s simple enough, sir. That hateful mother had married that poor young man when he was a mere lad to her ugly niece because she was an heiress. They led a cat-and-dog life; and, finally, he was so tired of her throwing her money in his teeth he left her. He had been bred to no trade, and he just took to drawing. He met your cousin somewhere down in the country, and married her.

“I’m not saying it was right, sir, but he saw there was no one to care for her in her home, and he loved her so, he thought he could make her happy. He worked hard for her, I will say; and if her marriage lines had been

worth all they seemed he couldn’t have made more of her. My husband said I was a wicked woman to say such a thing; but to my mind, sir, it was my Mrs. Clifford who seemed that poor young man’s true wife—not the woman who had made his life so wretched; he was glad to get away from her at any price.”

“And I suppose he left her?”

“He did, sir, but not in the way you think. The shock killed him. The doctor said he’d heart-disease; anyway, he died when he saw his wife—his legal wife. I mean, he never had the pain of seeing Mrs. Clifford’s face when she learned how he had deceived her.”

“Died?”

“Aye! They took him away and gave him a grand funeral, very different from the best he could afford for his little lad. Then Mrs. Clifford (I must call her that, sir), she was ill for weeks, and then she wrote once more to her father and no answer came!”

“Poor girl!”

“Aye! I’d easily have kept her, but my husband was a harsh man. He’d not have minded her poverty, but he wouldn’t see the difference between her who had been so cruelly deceived and those foolish girls who go wrong knowingly. He couldn’t bear to see me with her, and so just a week after she had written to her father she went!”

“But surely she said good-bye?”

“She didn’t, sir! I fancy she knew it’d be too painful for us both. She took nothing that belonged to her. She just slipped out one June evening in the gloaming, and—I’ve never seen her since!”

“She must be dead! Driven wild by suffering she must have killed herself!”

“I thought that, sir, myself for many many a long day; but I know better now!”

“Do you mean you have heard from her?”

“Just that, sir! Nearly two years after she went away there came a gentleman here and asked for me, sir. I can’t tell you how he began, but before I understood he was

shaking hands with me, and thanking me with the tears in his eyes, and then he told me he had married Mrs. Clifford and was going to take her far away from all who had been unkind to her. She had wanted to come with him, but he thought she was not strong enough. He brought me the loveliest clock you ever saw from her, and just a picture of her dear face, and he gave me a bank-note from himself, and would insist on my taking it, though I told him five pounds would pay all I had spent on Mrs. Clifford—let alone fifty!”

“And he did not tell you his name?”

“He didn’t, sir! He promised me if ever they came back to England he would bring his wife to see me. Time would have made her stronger then, and softened the old wounds. And then, as he was going, he turned round once more and said however long he lived he should never forget what I’d done for his wife (it was little enough, I’m sure), and that if Heaven ever sent him a little girl she should be called after me!”

Mrs. Pink paused; the tears were running down her cheeks from old memories.

Guy thanked her warmly. His worst fears were laid to rest now. Magdalene had not been driven by despair to the sin of suicide, and for at least twenty years she had been safe and happy in a good man’s home.

But how in the world was he to find her? All he knew she had gone abroad some twenty years before; to what country, to what continent even he did not know. Nay, more—Mrs. Pink could not tell him her husband’s name!

(To be continued.)

It was the policy of the good old gentleman to make his children feel that home was the happiest place in the world; and I value this delicious home feeling as one of the choicest gifts that a parent can bestow.



[THE CHAISE HAD HARDLY DRAWN UP WHEN AN EQUESTRIAN CAME ROUND THE BEND—IT WAS GIFFARD RAY.]

NOVELLETTE.]

TRUE TO HER WORD.

—30—

CHAPTER I.

"This is the last sunset I shall see in Collingford for many days and weeks to come," said Grace Fenwick, with a sigh, as she stood with her sister Mary at the garden-gate of the Rectory, her large grey eyes eagerly devouring the homely but picturesque scenery that lay before her.

The sun sent a red glow over sky and earth, and the birds in the thick ivy that grew round the church tower were singing their good-night song; and it seemed to Grace, standing at the rustic gate which led into the churchyard, that she had never fully appreciated her dear old home until that moment.

"Is it possible that you can regret leaving this dreary country village?" asked Mary, glancing at her sister in surprise. "One would think that you would be glad to get away from such a humdrum place, I know that I should!"

The two girls, although sisters, were utterly dissimilar in character and appearance. Grace was thoughtful and earnest, Mary selfish and vain. Grace thought of others, Mary only of herself.

Notwithstanding that Grace was superior to her sister in everything except beauty, unselish and self-sacrificing, the Rev. Nicholas Fenwick and his wife bestowed the most affection upon Mary.

They were not unkind to Grace, but they overlooked her, she being so willing to be left in the background.

Had anyone told them of their preference for Mary they would have been both hurt and annoyed, for they were not conscious of it themselves.

It was Grace who visited the sick, and

attended to the wants of the poor, who took the responsibility of the household from her invalid mother's shoulders, and saw to her unruly brothers and sisters; while Mary did absolutely nothing unless she was forced from her habitual sloth from very shame.

"Collingford has never been a dull place to me," said Grace, in answer to her sister.

"Never found it dull? Then perhaps you will tell me what you find lively in it?"

"I always found plenty to occupy my mind here," replied Grace, with a smile, "and I deeply regret having to leave Collingford."

"Regret leaving Collingford? How strangely you talk!"

"In what way do I talk strangely?"

"You talk more like an old woman than a young girl. Anyone would think that you were fifty instead of two-and-twenty."

"You will never understand me, Mary," said Grace, putting her arm round her sister's waist.

"I don't believe I ever shall," was Mary's reply. "You are quiet, subdued, and yet you seem happy."

"Shall I feel happy amongst strangers?" said Grace, doubtfully.

"Of course you will, Grace. You will be a different girl when you get to London. You work too hard, and don't think enough of yourself. Why should you see a lot of ungrateful people, who only care for you for what they can get out of you? You have not yet got over the effect of the fever you caught through nursing little Bob. What an ungrateful little wretch he must have been to repay all your kindness by giving you a fever! All your beautiful hair had to be cut off too. It does seem a shame!"

"I may not look so nice, but I feel more comfortable without it," replied Grace, cheerfully. "I was fortunate to escape with my life. I am grateful for that."

"And what am I to do when you are gone?" said Mary, with startling abruptness. "I suppose mamma will want me to take your

position, and I shall have to work like you did, from morning till night. How I do dislike brothers and sisters; they are such a nuisance!"

"They are rather troublesome," admitted Grace.

"They are always troublesome," replied Mary. "And I shall have to darn socks and stockings all day. What a wretched prospect I have before me!"

"You must make the best of it, Mary," said Grace, kindly. "It is not my fault that I am obliged to leave Collingford. It is papa's wish."

"I was not blaming you," said Mary. "It is not your fault, but I wish I was in your place."

"You have no reason to envy me," observed Grace, with her quaint smile. "My visit to London is anything but a pleasure trip. I go to work, not to play."

"Work or play, anything is better than the life I am leading here. There is nothing stirring but stagnation in this place."

"Can you talk like that on a beautiful evening like this?" said Grace, indignantly.

"Yes I can," replied Mary quickly. "I hate the place. I am tired of the same old stupid trees, the same old walks. The place is too familiar to me; familiarity breeds contempt, you know."

"Then I suppose you don't feel inclined to come for a walk this evening?" said Grace, "a farewell walk, Mary?"

"I hate walking," replied Mary, with a frown. "There is not a spot about here that I have not seen a thousand times."

"Very well, Mary, I will go alone," said Grace, in hurt tones, and a dark shadow of disappointment came across her face.

Selfish as she was, Mary perceived how greatly she had hurt her sister in refusing to accompany her on her farewell walk to her old favourite haunts, and felt very much ashamed of herself too.

"No, Grace, you shall not go alone," she

said, kindly. "I will accompany you. What a strange girl you are, Grace?"

So the two girls passed through the gate hand-in-hand, and went down the winding lane; and a pretty picture they made in their white summer dresses and sailor hats, while overhead the branches of the trees met, making like a framework to the picture.

Mary was much taller than Grace, and a much more showy girl than her sister; a girl who would undoubtedly attract the most attention on first introduction, but one of those creatures whom one can grow very tired of after a time.

Grace, on the other hand, had a way of winning people's hearts after a time by her unostentatious manner and gentle nature. But although she was good-natured and yielding in some things, she had a very firm will when once she made up her mind; and her sisters and brothers had learnt that when she once said no to anything she would never alter her mind. But she never said the word "No" unless she felt obliged to do so.

"You don't mean to say you are going to Fenwick Hall?" observed Mary in dismayed tones, as Grace turned up a narrow path-way between the well-clipped hedges.

"But I do," said Grace. "And why not?"

"Because I always feel miserable and discontented when I see that old place," replied Mary. "It reminds me all too vividly of our fallen grandeur. To think that one time that the Fenwicks were the richest family in the county, and that now Fenwick Hall is fast tumbling into decay!"

"I always feel melancholy when I approach the dear old place," said Grace, thoughtfully; "but still it has a strange fascination for me, and I have spent hours and hours there."

"When I go there I always feel a most intense hatred for Gifford Ray," returned Mary. "Why should he be in possession of the ancient home of the Fenwicks?"

"Simply because Gifford Ray's brother bought the property from our grandfather," said Grace. "If anyone is to blame it is our grandfather for being extravagant."

"I can't help hating him," cried Mary. "Look how he adds insult to injury by allowing the place to fall into decay!"

"Gifford Ray has not the money to keep up in grand style," said Grace; "and he is too proud to part with the estate."

"You are always ready to make excuses for everyone," cried Mary, impatiently, as she flings open a gate and enters the grounds of Fenwick Hall.

The sun has disappeared behind the western hills, but the sky is still one mass of crimson and gold, and Fenwick Hall stood out in bold relief.

A fine old place it was, with a broad terrace in front, and broad marble steps leading up to the central entrance. It was built of red brick, and had quaint twisted chimneys from which no smoke had appeared for many and many a year, and showed many signs of being quite uninhabited.

But although the house was tenantless, Grace had discovered a way to enter it, and had done so many a time. Some narrow steps led up to a balcony, and putting her hand through an opening left by a broken pane of glass, the girl quickly pulled back the latch and threw open the casement. In another moment they were both standing in the room. The smile had gone from Grace's lips, and she looked so pale and sad that Mary was quite startled.

"Come away, Grace," cried Mary, taking hold of her hand. "I was right when I told you not to come here. By coming here we are only reminded of things that we ought to forget!"

"I wish to be reminded of our fallen grandeur," replied Grace, speaking slowly and distinctly.

"You are very foolish, Grace," said Mary. "What good can it possibly do us to know that at one time the Fenwicks were rich and prosperous, now that they are in debt and diffi-

culties! Looking at this grand old ruin—for ruin it almost is—will not make father a bit more able to dress and educate his children properly."

Mary threw herself into an arm-chair as she spoke, a chair that had once been handsome; but the velvet had faded, and the only thing it had to recommend it now was that it was comfortable.

"I have come here, Mary," said Grace solemnly, "to make a vow—a vow that shall be religiously kept."

"Really, Grace," said Mary, stretching her long limbs, "you look quite dramatic!"

Grace had drawn herself to her full height, and there was a flash of excitement in her face that intensified her beauty. The bantering words died from Mary's lips, and she gazed at her sister in the greatest surprise and admiration.

"You will laugh at me when I tell you what my vow is," said Grace, looking down at her sister, who regarded her with increasing wonder every moment.

"No I will not," declared Mary. "How terribly in earnest you look, Grace!"

"I am in earnest," replied Grace, and her hand trembled with excitement, as she raised it above her head. "I am in earnest, Mary. Here, under this dear old roof, that has sheltered so many of our ancestors, I solemnly vow to do everything in my power to win it back to our family. Where there's a will there's a way, Mary; and henceforth I shall only have one object in my life, and that is, to restore Fenwick Hall to my father."

"You are making a foolish vow, Grace!" said Mary, jumping from her chair, "a vow that you can by no means keep. The Fenwicks are beggars, and beggars they must remain."

"I am young, strong, and resolute," replied Grace, by no means shaken in her resolution.

"But you are only a girl after all, Grace, remember that," said Mary; "Going away has excited you, and to-morrow you will laugh at yourself for being so foolish."

"This is no sudden determination, Mary," said Grace, "and one day you will see my vow fulfilled."

"I shall have to live a very long time then," and Mary gave vent to an amused laugh.

"The idea of you, a penniless girl, talking like that! I shall really begin to think that you are going mad. We are poor, and poor we shall remain; and poor people will get deeper in the mire year by year; and every time I pass this house I shall see it getting more gloomy and dilapidated."

"This place will one day be ours," said Grace, confidently. "I feel it, I know it; something tells me that I shall succeed."

"Why, Grace, how excited you look!" cried Mary. "I have never seen you look like this before. You, who are generally so calm, so tranquil!"

"Perhaps you may never see me so excited again," replied Grace, in a lower tone; "for it is only by calmness and resolution that I can gain my object."

"How do you propose to carry out your wonderful scheme?" asked Mary. Then she adds, glancing at her gloved hand, "How horribly dusty this place is! Look at my glove, how dirty it has become; and I only placed my hand on the table for one little moment! I hope you will see that the place is well-cleaned when you gain possession of it."

"You cannot shake my confidence by laughing at me," said Grace. "Ridicule cannot turn me from my purpose, Mary. You do not know what can be done if a person starts with one object in life."

"It is my opinion that you are a great deal too romantic," cried Mary. "Let me see, if you put two shillings a week in the savings bank, how long will it take you to buy Fenwick Hall. It is clear to me that you will have to live a thousand years to carry out your scheme!"

"I am glad that I afford you so much

amusement," said Grace, gravely. The temporary flush of excitement had gone from her beautiful, sensitive face, leaving it more pale than ever by the contrast.

"Do not be offended, Grace," said Mary, "for I cannot help thinking your vow a very extravagant one."

"Most people would think me mad if they were to hear me," said Grace, "and I dare say you are of that opinion."

"If you are mad, it is in a very harmless way," cried Mary. "I have often heard that most people are cranky on some point or other. Every one has some hobby or mania."

"What is yours?" asked Grace, looking at her sister. "Perhaps though you are superior to all mankind in this respect!"

Mary made no reply, but looked round the long, dull room. It was growing very dark, and the girl began to feel a strange apprehension stealing over her—the place was so silent and gloomy.

"Let us go now," suggested Mary. "I don't like old tenantless houses at night time. I feel quite creepy."

"One moment, and we will go," said Grace. "How nervous you are. Why I would not mind remaining here all night!"

"I would not do so for a thousand pounds," cried Mary, looking towards the door. Then she said, almost in a whisper, clutching her sister by the waist, "What is that noise on the stairs?"

"I hear nothing," replied Grace, with an amused smile. "It is all your fancy, you nervous little stupid."

"There it is again, I tell you," persisted Mary, dragging her sister towards the window, and this time Grace herself hears a tramping noise on the stairs.

"I will remain and see what it is," said Grace, who was of a resolute character, and not inclined to take alarm without there was something really to be alarmed about.

"No! no!" said Mary, trying to drag her sister towards the window. "Come away, come away."

Seeing that Grace had thoroughly made up her mind to remain, and resisted all her efforts to drag her alone, Mary with a cry of terror released her hold, and rushed through the window, leaving her sister to the unknown danger that threatened.

No sooner had Mary disappeared through the door than with a pitying smile at her sister's weakness, Grace advanced towards the door with a firm and resolute step.

Taking hold of the handle of the door with a slightly trembling hand she flung the door wide open, to see a tall, stalwart figure standing on the threshold. So dark was the landing that neither she nor the person who stood before her could clearly see each other. Before Grace could speak she was seized roughly by the shoulder.

"Are you a robber or a tramp?" cried a loud commanding voice, and she was shaken violently.

This was the roughest treatment she had received in her life, and had her unknown assailant being able to see that she was a woman, he would not have behaved in such an unceremonious manner. When a man fancies he is in an empty house, and suddenly comes upon a person who has no right there, he is not very gentle in his manner.

"You have no right here," he said, giving Grace another shake, and then he dragged her into the room, and towards the window.

By the dim light that came through the open casement he saw that the person he held in his strong grasp was no burly scoundrel, but a woman; and with a cry of dismay he released his hold and they stood looking at each other, Grace with the deepest indignation in her dark eyes.

"I really beg your pardon," stammered the young man awkwardly, as he took off his hat. "It was so dark that I could not see who you were. I am afraid I treated you very roughly?"

"You had a right to treat me roughly, for I

had no business here," replied Grace, speaking very slowly and distinctly, and eyeing the young man disdainfully all the time.

"I do not know what excuse to make," said the young man excitedly, "I am afraid that I must have hurt you very much."

"You need not apologise, Mr. Giffard Ray," said Grace, with a mocking smile, "for that is your name, I think?"

"That is my name," replied Giffard, admiring the girl more and more every moment. Then he added, "This is quite a strange adventure. It is ten years since I left this place. I was a mere boy at the time, and when I entered this gloomy old house I never expected to meet with—with, I must, I cannot help saying it, with such a beautiful young lady? Your name—will you tell me your name?"

"My name is of no consequence to you," returned Grace defiantly, "for in all probability we may never meet again. Good night, Mr. Giffard Ray."

She would have passed out through the open window if he had not stood in her way.

"Will," she cried, looking at him, and in spite of herself, she cannot help thinking how handsome he is, although she hates him, "will you allow me to pass, or are you going to give me in charge of the police for being on your premises for an unlawful purpose?"

The young man gave an amused smile, but made no attempt to move.

"Before you go I wish you would answer one question," he pleaded.

"I suppose I must, since you have the power to detain me!" said Grace, spitefully.

She had always hated Giffard Ray, although she had defended him to her sister, for she always regarded the Rays as the enemies to the Fenwicks. In fact it was said, either with or without foundation, that Giffard Ray's grandfather had cheated Joseph Fenwick out of his property, but there was no tangible proof of this.

Sometimes Grace told herself that this dislike to Giffard Ray was unreasonable; but its very unreasonableness made her dislike him all the more.

"You are not obliged to answer me, but I should be pleased if you would," said Giffard Ray, moving from the window.

"I do not wish to please you," replied Grace. "No Fenwick wishes to please a Ray. The Rays and the Fenwicks must always be enemies!"

"You are a Fenwick!" cried Giffard Ray, in the greatest surprise.

"Yes, I am a Fenwick," replied Grace, and she gave the young man a glance of evil contempt that made him feel very uncomfortable. "I came here to take a last glimpse at the dear old place before leaving here for many months, perhaps for many years. I wish I had not done so," vindictively, "since I have put myself under an obligation to you!"

Before Giffard could make reply Grace had passed through the window, and was hurrying down the steps. He stood there, watching her retreating figure, hoping she would turn back. But she never did so once, and was soon lost in the darkness.

CHAPTER II.

"Why, what a bruise you have on your shoulder!" said Mary to her sister when they were dressing next morning. "How in the world did you get it, Grace?"

"A great, big, horrible man did that last night," replied Grace; "when you left me alone at Fenwick Hall."

"Then there was some one at Fenwick Hall?"

"Of course there was!"

"Not a ghost?"

"Not a ghost, but a real live person," said Grace; "and when I opened the door he seized me by the shoulder and shook me."

"What a brute!" cried Mary, indignantly, "to hurt a girl like that."

"It was Giffard Ray who hurt me like that, and I hate him for it!" said Grace.

"You saw Giffard Ray!" said Mary, excitedly. "What is he like?"

A natural question for a woman to ask.

"Like—a like a very handsome man," replied Grace. "I am so sorry to find him handsome; I pictured such a different person, a great clumsy-looking fellow, and not a well-bred gentleman. But I hate him more than ever, because I cannot look down at him as I should like."

"Did he know who you were?" asked Mary, wishing now that she had remained at the Hall with her sister, for then she would have seen Giffard Ray. She felt more favourably disposed towards him now that she had heard that he was handsome. How curious she felt to see him!

"I told him who I was, and that we must always be implacable enemies," said Grace, "and before he could recover from his astonishment had hurried away."

"He must think you a very strange girl!" said Mary, with a laugh. "Ah! here is mamma."

A pale, careworn-looking woman entered the bed-room, and Grace feels very sorrowful as she glances at her mother, who had evidently passed a sleepless night.

"I shall miss you sadly," said Mrs. Fenwick, kissing her daughter.

"And so shall I," cried Mary, thinking of the extra load that will fall upon her shoulders. "But it is impossible, of course, for us to remain in this little village all our lives. Papa's expenses are increasing every day."

They go down to breakfast, and the meal was a very dismal affair, for no one could hardly eat or drink; and the children, who were generally so noisy, were quiet and still, for the idea of Grace going away was terrible to them all.

Grace appeared to be the liveliest, for she was the only person who laughed and talked; but no one knew what it cost her to do so. If she had remained silent for a moment she would have burst into a flood of tears.

She was very much relieved when she had taken farewell of every one but Mary, for the parting was a painful one, and therefore best over.

Mary and Grace sat side by side in the little basket pony-chaise lent to them by a friend, and on the other seats was Grace's baggage. Mary, now it had come to the push, felt dreadfully out of the idea of losing her sister, but she tried to persuade herself that she would soon return.

The pony had proceeded down the lane for about a mile at a slow trot (for he had never been known to hurry himself on any account) when they heard the sound of horse's hoofs. So narrow was the green and shady lane that Mary was compelled to draw the chaise to the side of the road. Hardly had she done so when an equestrian came round the sharp bend in the lane at a walking pace.

Mary guessed who he was from the description Grace had given of him, and the angry frown that her sister gave on catching sight of the horseman.

But unabashed by the angry glance that Grace gave him, Giffard Ray pulled up his horse, and after bowing politely said, in his pleasantest tone,—

"Good morning, Miss Fenwick! I hope you have quite forgiven me for the unfortunate mistake I made yesterday when I caught hold of you in that rough, unceremonious manner?"

"I wish you to understand once for all that I wish to have nothing to say to you," said Grace, severely. "You cannot have much pride, Mr. Ray, or you would not force your presence upon me. You compel me to use words that I would gladly leave unsaid."

"Don't be so rude," whispered Mary, who was quite taken by Giffard Ray's handsome

face and elegant manner. A good-looking face is a great passport to a woman's heart.

Giffard overheard Mary's words, and felt grateful to her. She was not quite so hard-hearted as her sister he told himself.

"I am afraid I am sadly deficient in pride," said Giffard Ray, with a smile, that showed his strong white teeth. "You must really be charitable enough to make some allowance for me, Miss Fenwick."

Grace made no reply, but taking the reins out of Mary's hand whipped the pony up, and as the pony trotted away they heard a ringing laugh behind them. The young man was evidently amused at the girl's conduct.

"How I hate him!" cried Grace, turning red to the forehead. "I should like to strike him with this whip!"

"He is certainly very aggravating," said Mary, who was highly amused at the young man's manner. "I can see plainly that it will not be very easy to put him down. He is one of those persons who will not be offended."

"At any rate, I shall not have the annoyance of seeing him for some time," said Grace, as she pulled up the pony before the little wayside station.

The train was due in five minutes, and therefore Grace and Mary did not have much time to talk. A warm embrace, a few messages to the children, her father and mother, and then Grace turned away with tear-dimmed eyes.

Mary felt very sad and lonely as she turned the pony's head in the direction of home. She had never realised till that moment how different everything would be when Grace was far away. She had always had the greatest dislike to Collingford, and she disliked it more than ever now.

Of what was Mary thinking as she drove along? More of Giffard Ray than her sister, Giffard Ray, how handsome he was! She was half in love with him already.

"Grace thought of bringing back Fenwick Hall one day," said Mary to herself. "But perhaps, after all, the place will come back to our family through me. Why should I not marry Giffard Ray? And when I am married to him I must insist upon him not selling Fenwick Hall. I am young and beautiful, he told me that, and it is not quite impossible that he might fall in love with me. I am sure he will find nothing else to do than to make love in this country village!"

For three whole days Mary saw nothing of Giffard Ray, although she took long walks in hopes of meeting him. But he never came, and Mary was very indignant, for she knew perfectly well that he was still in Collingford, for people spoke about him.

If he had known how disappointed Mary felt at his non-appearance perhaps he would have taken compassion on the girl. She was really in love with Giffard Ray, and felt very unhappy to think that he did not care for her.

When a young girl lives in a country village without much to think about, and with little to occupy her mind, it is surprising how ready she is to give her heart away to the first handsome stranger that appears on the scene.

Mary had received a letter from Grace, and she sent one in return, but she made no mention of her meeting with Giffard Ray in the barn. She did not care about speaking or writing about Giffard Ray to anyone.

Being a clergyman's daughter, it was compulsory on Mary's part to go to church at least twice on Sunday; and it must be confessed that the girl did not care very much about doing so. If she had been as well dressed as some of the other girls who attended church it would be another matter. But feeling shabby beside the others, her attendance at church was not unattended by annoyance.

However, on this particular Sunday, she was highly delighted at being present at morning service; for immediately on entering the sacred building she caught sight of Giffard

Ray. He was sitting alone in front of her, but during church time he never once looked round, being quite unconscious of the girl's presence.

It was not Giffard Ray's custom to go to church every Sunday, but when he did he was very earnest and sincere, and his eyes did not wander round the interior of the building, or rest on the congregation as though he were in a theatre.

However, when he came out of church he walked up to Mary, and she introduced him to her father, the Rev. Fenwick. He won the clergyman's heart by praising his sermon, and was so enthusiastic in his remarks that he won the heart of the parson, who had been in unusually good form that morning.

As they proceeded home, Mary and her father arm-in-arm, the girl told him how she had met Giffard Ray.

"I don't believe Giffard Ray is half so bad as people make him out," said the Rev. Nicholas Fenwick, as he opened the gate leading into the well-kept, old-fashioned garden.

"Neither do I!" returns Mary, looking down upon the ground.

And after this Sunday Giffard Ray became a constant visitor at the Rectory.

CHAPTER III.

Wx must leave the quiet village of Collingford and follow Grace's footsteps up to busy, bustling London. She was employed by a family in Bloomsbury-square as a governess, and received the munificent sum of thirty pounds a year for her services.

Her situation was not at all a hard one, and Mrs. Wentworth was very kind and considerate—so kind and considerate that it was a pleasure to do all one could to please her, as Grace told her sister in one of her letters.

Grace was quite surprised at the little she had to do, that is, comparatively with what she had had to do at home. At home there had always been something to do, and her work seemed never done; but the house in Bloomsbury-square was a well-regulated one, and Grace had her regular hours for work and for recreation.

She was treated in every way as one of the household, and the servants were just as obliging as their mistress. Servants are very apt to follow the example of their master and mistress, and, in all probability, had they treated Grace as an inferior they would have done so too.

Grace's life was not nearly so dull as it was when at Collingford, for she often went with the children to the theatre and other places of amusement; and when there was a party at the house she was always invited.

Grace's quiet and unassuming manner soon won friends, and she was very often invited out, much to Mrs. Wentworth's joy.

When Mary read Grace's letter down in the little village she would often feel a great shock of envy in her breast, for it had been many a month since she had been to a theatre.

In fact, the Rev. Fenwick had a great objection to those places of amusement; and Grace, not wishing to give him any annoyance, took care not to mention anything about them in her letters to him.

Yes, Mary felt very envious of Grace when she heard how very happy she was, and had the frankness to tell her so when she wrote. The only consolation she had was that Giffard Ray was still at Collingford.

It must be confessed that Mary had not made much progress in the young man's heart, but still they were often together, and hope told a flattering tale to poor Mary, who really fancied that her love would be ultimately returned.

Grace had been about three months in London, when she was introduced at a dinner party to a gentleman whose name was

Clement Dale—a tall, fair man, with steel grey eyes, and a restless, scheming look.

A strange man was Clement Dale, one of those men who never seem quite at ease. He was one of those fellows who seem to be perpetually on the alert, and not the most trivial thing could occur near him without he failed to observe it.

A very sharp, observant man was Clement Dale, and many of his friends said that they believed that he had eyes at the back of his head, for he always appeared to know what was going on behind him.

Directly Clement Dale's sharp eyes rested on Grace's fair face he took the most violent fancy to her, but the girl did not reciprocate his feelings. On the contrary, she did not care for him a bit, feeling a strange aversion to him if anything.

After her first meeting Clement Dale took every opportunity of appearing at all places where Grace went, and if he had only the chance would speak to Grace, and on rare occasions dance with her.

At length, so obvious did his attentions become, that Mrs. Wentworth congratulated Grace on the conquest she had made, much to that young lady's annoyance, who repudiated all interest in Clement Dale.

"But he will win you in spite of yourself," observed Mrs. Wentworth, looking up from her needlework.

"What makes you think that?"

"Because Clement Dale is so persistent," replied Mrs. Wentworth.

"Then, according to you," said Grace laughingly; "a man is only to be persistent to conquer a woman's heart."

"As a general rule," cried Mrs. Wentworth, who is a stout, good-looking woman of about forty-five. "If a man is persevering and has no rival, he can nearly always succeed in marrying the woman he desires."

"Clement Dale will never marry me," replied Grace, in a decided voice.

But Mrs. Wentworth was not at all convinced by this answer. She felt perfectly assured that Grace would marry Clement Dale.

"The great pity is that he is a poor man," said Mrs. Wentworth. "That is, comparatively poor."

"I can never marry a poor man even if I were to love him," said Grace, thinking of the vow she had made in Fenwick Hall.

"And why not?" asked Mrs. Wentworth, in the greatest surprise. "I never thought that you were a mercenary girl, Grace."

"But I am," replied Grace, looking up from a French exercise that she was correcting. "I am afraid that my frank avowal of this fault in my character will make you think the less of me."

"Not at all," said Mrs. Wentworth, reassuringly. "I think that if all girls were as sensible as you the world would be much better. By-the-by, you are coming to the dinner-party at Neuville's to-night, are you not?"

"I am afraid you are making me too fond of enjoyment," Mrs. Wentworth, said Grace. "If you will excuse me I will not go to the Neuville's to-night."

"You must have some reason for staying away. What is it?" asked Mrs. Wentworth.

"I will be frank with you," said Grace.

"You always are. Well, dear, what is the reason?"

"I will not go the dinner-party to night because I know that Mr. Dale will be there," said Grace. "It is very annoying that I should be haunted by that man as though he were my shadow."

"Some girls would be highly complimented at such flattery and attentions," observed Mrs. Wentworth, "and I cannot help thinking that you are concealing your real feelings."

"I never feel flattered by the attentions of a person that I do not like," replied Grace.

"Let us dismiss such an unpleasant subject from our minds."

"As you please, dear," said Mrs. Wentworth, as she returned to her needlework, while Grace pored over French exercise.

That evening Grace did not go to Mrs. Neuville's dinner-party. Instead of doing this she took down a novel from the bookshelf, and taking possession of a snug arm-chair began to read. The book was a very interesting one, and Grace soon became so absorbed in it that she soon forgot the outside world. She did not look up once from the book until she had read the first volume, and then she saw by the gilt clock on the mantelpiece that she had been reading over three hours.

After resting a quarter of an hour to think over what she had just read, she was about to take up the second volume and commence to read when a servant entered the room.

"Mr. Clement Dale," the servant announced, and before she could deny herself to him—which she would have certainly done—Mr. Dale entered the room. He had taken the precaution to slip half-a-crown in the girl's hand, and had informed her that Grace expected to see him, in order that she should not refuse to grant him an interview. So his cunning ruse had succeeded.

Grace cast an angry glance at the servant before she shut the door, and then asked Mr. Dale to be seated. He took a chair very near Grace, nearer than she liked, and before speaking his restless eyes wandered round the room, taking in every detail. Grace felt quite sure that if he had chosen he could have given an inventory of the room without writing it down. So long a pause was embarrassing to Grace, so she gave a little cough. He looked round at her with a start, fixing his restless grey eyes upon her face.

"You were reading when I came in," he observed in a low, nervous voice. "I am afraid I have disturbed you."

"The book is a very interesting one, Mr. Dale."

"You are fond of reading, Miss Grace Fenwick?"

"Yes, are not you?"

"I like reading, but not this kind of book," said Mr. Dale, looking into the green covers deprecatingly.

"What kind of book do you like?"

"I don't like novels," replied Clement Dale. "There is nothing to be learned by reading novels. I think they are waste of time. I may be wrong, but that is my opinion."

"But one cannot always be working," replied Grace, "and I think that a good novel is the greatest recreation one can have."

"I am sorry I cannot agree with you in that," said Clement Dale taking up the novel, and turning the pages over with his long, thin hand. "Now I suppose there is a lot written about love in this book, Miss Grace?"

"Love, jealousy, and hate," answered Grace, smiling at Mr. Clement Dale's strange, abrupt manner.

"Love, jealousy, and hate," repeated Mr. Clement slowly and distinctly, as he drew his chair near to Grace. "Now I don't hate you, Miss Grace, but I do feel jealous of you sometimes when you are talked to by other men, and I always love you. The object of my visit is to tell you this."

Grace was completely taken by surprise, and for a moment or two she had quite lost the use of her voice. She could only look at him in utter astonishment. Looking at his face, his sharp restless face, she can see that he is terribly in earnest.

"The object of my visit is to tell you this," he repeated, looking as if about to take her hand, and then suddenly changing his mind.

"Mr. Dale!" said Grace, rising from her chair. "I really did not expect to hear such words from your lips. Never, never, never repeat them again!"

"Am I to understand that you refuse to become my wife?" said Clement, Dale and he, too, rose from his chair.

He had grown very haggard and white. His face looked positively thinner, his eyes

were more restless than ever. Evidently he deeply loved Grace. The girl looked at him pitiingly, but no feeling stronger than pity was in her heart.

"I cannot marry you, Mr. Dale," said Grace very gently.

"Is this your final decision?"

"Yes, Mr. Dale."

Clement Dale, after going to the window and looking out, walked towards the door. His hand was on the handle when he turned round. He felt as though he could not leave Grace in that way—that if he pleaded he might get her to alter her mind.

"Do you know that in sending me away from you you are doing me a greater injury than if you were to send a bullet through my brains, and lay me lifeless at your feet? Do you know the injury you are causing me, you cruel girl?"

"I cannot help that," was Grace's ready answer.

"You cannot help that," said Dale, "when a word from your lips would make me the happiest of men. No one will ever love you as I love you Grace."

"I do not want any one to love me," replied Grace. "I have made up my mind never to love any man."

Mr. Dale looked at her in surprise.

"Foolish girl!" said Clement Dale, "I thought once that no woman would ever win my heart, but you have taught me the cruel pain of love."

"It will be better for us both if the interview is ended," said Grace, with a weary sigh. "If I even loved you, Mr. Dale, I could not marry you."

"And why?"

"Because you are poor."

"Oh! I see," said Clement Dale; "you are like all women—you love money."

"I have some reason for wishing to be rich," said Grace, "and I repeat, Mr. Clement Dale, that if you had been a wealthy man the answer I would have given you would have been a very different one."

"Then it is the want of gold that stands between me and my desires?" cried Clement Dale, wiping the perspiration from his face. "If I were rich you would marry me? Say that again?"

"If you were rich I would marry you!" repeated Grace, and she certainly meant what she said.

"How long will you give me to make my fortune?" asked Clement Dale, and a hungry, calculating look came into his face.

"Three months," said Grace, with an incredulous smile; "but I am talking nonsense now, Mr. Dale. This interview had better end. It can do no good."

"Three months. If I come to you with a full purse, in three months you will marry me?" cried Clement Dale, nervously stroking his beard. "It shall be done Grace, it shall be done. Will you swear that you will marry in three months, if I carry out what I promise?"

"I swear that if you are a rich man in that short time I'll marry you," returned Grace, unhesitatingly; "but it is impossible. I am only raising up false hopes in your heart—hopes that soon must be dashed to the ground."

"Before three months is over my head I will lay ten thousand pounds at your feet," said Clement Dale, and he thought to himself, "It must, it shall be done. I will do it although I risk penal servitude."

"Remember that I will not wait one moment longer," cried Grace.

"Three months will be ample," said Clement Dale. "I do not ask for a moment more. My wife in three months, Grace. I would risk life, even dishonour, to win you."

He raised her white shapely hand to his quivering lips, and in another moment was gone.

CHAPTER IV.

MARY'S consternation was great, when one morning she received a letter from her sister Grace, in which she signified her intention of coming down to Collingford for a week. Every person in the Rectory was pleased, with the exception of Mary, who feared Grace as a rival.

Giffard Ray spoke a great deal too often of Grace to please Mary, and she felt greatly afraid that if he were to set eyes on her sister once more, all her hopes of winning him for herself would be dashed to the ground. When two sisters become rivals, they generally hate each other intensely.

"Why, how white you look child," said Mrs. Fenwick, looking at Mary. "You must not get so excited over the anticipation of seeing Grace, or to make yourself ill. Of course the news was quiet unexpected, and took you by surprise. What a foolish little thing you are, Mary!"

Grace had not deemed it necessary to give them very long notice of her intended visit. She had only given them twenty-four hours, in fact.

"If she wins Giffard Ray from me I will hate her, sister though she be," said Miss Mary to herself when alone. She did love Giffard Ray with all her heart and soul, and the prospect of his marrying anyone else but herself was terrible to her.

She did not feel as though she could breathe in the house, so put on her hat and hurried down the lane. Her brain was on fire. She felt a presentiment of coming evil or dread of the future she had never known before. She could think of nothing but Giffard Ray and Grace. How could they be kept apart! It was impossible for them to be kept out of each other's sight. Grace would ruin her life utterly, she felt certain of that.

Hurriedly she walked along, when the very person of whom she was thinking came into view. It must be confessed that Giffard had paid more attention to this girl than he ought to have done, considering that he was only amusing himself at her expense.

But men are like that—even the best of them. They like to win the heart of a young and beautiful girl, even when they have no other object than of pleasantly spending what would otherwise be a dull half-hour. Giffard was thoughtless, that was all.

"Mary," he said—he called her Mary now—"Where are you going to in such a hurry?"

"For a walk," said Mary, hardly able to speak for tears.

"For a run I should think," replied Giffard. "What in the world is the matter. Has anything happened at home to put you out of temper?"

"No," said Mary, so sharply that Giffard Ray was quite startled, for he had never seen her like this before.

"You must not snap my head off, Mary!" said Giffard, with a laugh. "I never thought that you were bad-tempered before."

His bantering tone irritated her, and for a moment she feels as if she could hit him.

"Let me go my way," she said. "I wish to be alone."

She would have gone and left him, had he not laid a detaining hand on her arm.

"Do not go away before you say good-bye," he said.

"Good-bye," said Mary, growing strangely pale and very agitated. "I don't—I can't understand you."

"Then I will explain myself more fully," observed Giffard, leaning his back against a stile. "I am going to leave Collingford."

Going to leave Collingford! The news startled Mary. She felt faint; everything grew dim before her eyes. Mechanically she put her hand to her heart, for she feels suffocated.

"Going away from Collingford!" said Mary, leaning on the gate to steady herself, for her knees are trembling under her. He must not

see how the words he had just uttered have effected her. Her pride must keep her up.

"Yes, Mary, but I shall not be away very long," said Giffard, quite unconscious of the relief his last words have given her. It seemed like a reprieve to the girl. "I am going away for a week."

A week! Just the time Grace would be at Collingford. Heaven be thanked, they would not meet, after all.

"I thought I should like to say good-bye before I went," observed Giffard. "Can I execute any little commission for you while I am in London?"

"How kind of you to think of me," said Mary, gratefully; and then she told him of a few trifles that she wished for. The idea of him doing her any little slight service pleased her.

"I shall always think of you," replied Giffard frankly. "We are quite old friends now, are not we?"

"Yes," said Mary, wishing that they were something more than friends.

"Good-bye. Remember me to all at home," said Giffard. "Tell Frank that I will make him the largest kite he has ever seen, and if he don't take great care it will carry him up to the sky!"

"Then you won't come in, even for a moment?"

"No," said Giffard.

Mary held out her hand, and Giffard took it. They were very close together now. Mary looked unusually pretty that day. The temptation was too great. He stooped down and kissed her. The girl made no resistance, but stood as if rooted to the spot.

It was the first kiss he had ever given her. In another moment he was gone, and the girl stood alone in the lane, with her hand on her wildly-beating heart.

What did that kiss mean?

Was it a kiss of love, or was Giffard Ray only making sport of her feeling for him?

"Time will show," Mary thinks, as she turned in the direction of home.

At nine o'clock the following morning Grace arrived at the Rectory. Everyone came rushing out in the garden to greet her. Even Mary was glad to see her now that Giffard Ray was away.

Grace had greatly changed, everyone said so, and everyone must be right. She was no longer a girl, but a woman—a sternly, resolute woman.

Mrs. Fenwick looked at her with a sigh. She seemed so utterly changed. Most people would have thought that she had changed for the better; but Mrs. Fenwick thought that there was a hard look in her face.

Mary considered that Grace had greatly improved both in manner and appearance and quickly told her so; and her brother Jack was heard to declare that she had grown quite into a fashionable young lady.

For the first half-hour the children made such an uproar that it was almost impossible to hear what was said; and at last, in desperation, Grace was carried off to papa's study, and the door carefully locked. It was the only thing to be done.

Grace had not been at the Rectory long when she, of course, heard about Giffard's constant visits.

Everyone was loud in his praise. Grace was interested, although she pretended not to be so. She had only seen Giffard twice in her life, but she had often thought of him since. He had made a great impression on her, although she did all in her power not to acknowledge it.

She wondered why no one had ever mentioned Giffard in their letters, but she did not give expression to this thought.

The Rectory seemed to look very mean and shabby to Grace; and she saw, with a deep pang at her heart, that her father looked thinner and more careworn than ever. Oh! if she were only rich! She would make every sacrifice to be rich!

If she had money to give her father, how

quickly his trouble would disappear—like mist before the sun!

The children were growing every day, and required more food and clothing. How dreadfully shabby they looked! Would they never change? That was the question that Grace asked herself.

The children seemed to notice the strange change that had come over Grace.

They were just as fond of her as ever, but did not appear to be on such familiar terms; even Jack would not venture to rumple her short curly hair, as he used to do.

Grace perceived that the children were more inclined to obey her, and showed her a great deal more respect. Everything was changed to Grace. She felt disheartened and disappointed.

She was not at all the same Grace; and it was very seldom now that the old smile would light up her beautiful face. Only one idea took possession of her—that was money.

Money was the root of all happiness, Grace told herself. No one could be happy without they were rich.

She would often think of Clement Dale, and wonder if he would keep his promise.

On the third day of her visit Jack came running unceremoniously into the room, crying out at the top of his very loud voice,—
"Here is Giffard Ray!"

Grace was reclining on a very dingy and uncomfortable horse hair sofa. She rose to a sitting position just as Giffard entered the room, followed by Mary and the children. He had so many parcels that he could hardly carry them.

With a sigh of relief he threw them all on the table.

"You have come back before a week!" observed Mary. Then she blushed, remembering the kiss he had stolen from her in the lane.

"I have changed my mind, Mary," said Giffard. "Can't a fellow change his mind?"

"Of course," said Mary.
All this time Grace was unperceived. She was standing in a dark corner of the room, looking on with an amused smile—a smile that seemed all the more beautiful for being so rare.

While Giffard was distributing the toys to the children, who were very noisy and inclined to quarrel over them, Grace stood watching the unconscious Giffard. He was very good-natured, she thought—good-natured as well as handsome.

When he had settled with the children, he handed a few packages to Mary, saying, pleasantly,—

"You see I have not forgotten you!"

She looked at him gratefully and thanked him again and again; but the happy expression died away from her face on seeing her sister.

It was as though a cloud had come between her and the man she loved when Grace appeared upon the scene. At that moment she felt as if she hated Grace, that she would like to see her lying dead at her feet.

"I suppose you have quite forgotten me?" observed Grace, with a mocking smile.

Hearing the well-remembered voice Giffard turned quickly round.

"Miss Fenwick," he cried, "this is quite an unexpected pleasure!"

Mary cannot bear to see them talking together; with a heart that is beating painfully she quitted the room, making some excuse for doing so.

Giffard was quite startled with the change that has taken place in Grace, and he did not hesitate to tell her so.

"If it is an improvement to look older, much older, than I did I am improved," said Grace.

"When I met you first you were a pretty girl, now you are a beautiful woman!" cried Giffard Ray, gazing at her like one entranced.

"Hush! a truce to flattery," said Grace. "I am too used to it for it to give me any pleasure."

"Miss Fenwick," cried Giffard, "do you hate me as you said you did when we met in Fenwick Hall for the first time?"

"Why do you ask that question?"

"From mere curiosity," replied Giffard.

"I thought curiosity was only a woman's failing," said Grace.

"Perhaps it is," cried Giffard. "I make no excuses for my feelings. Let me have the truth!"

"Even if it is unpleasant?" said Grace.

"Even if it is unpleasant."

"Well, then, Mr. Giffard Ray, since you are brave enough to risk being told something unpleasant I will tell you nothing but the truth. How can I dislike you any longer when I find you such a general favourite in my father's house?"

"Then we are friends!" said Giffard Ray, holding out his hand. He watched for the girl's, however, with the greatest eagerness.

She could see the power she had over him, and kept him in suspense for a minute. At length she said,—

"Friends if you wish it."

"I do wish it!" said Giffard Ray, taking her hand in his, and at that moment Mary entered the room, and felt that all hopes of winning Giffard Ray had gone from her for ever.

There was an awkward pause, and during the pause Mary thought to herself,—

"Grace will only remain here three days longer."

It was the only consolation she had—a very poor one at the best.

The three days passed away, and a great deal of Grace's time was passed in Giffard's society.

Mary was unhappy, and avoided them both. She felt very indignant against Giffard.

Why had he stolen that kiss if he had not loved her? It was very wrong of him to do so. What right had he to trifle with her heart?

Mary felt now that the kiss was an insult. She felt so angry with herself for allowing him to take that kiss from the ruby lips, so angry that she struck herself a blow in the face with her clenched fist. She would never speak to him again, she told herself.

But when he spoke she had not the courage not to answer him. After all, it would look so strange to other people if she were to be rude to him. She was suffering intensely.

She was growing thinner and paler every day, but no one had noticed it as yet.

On the last day, the day on which it was arranged that she should return to London, Grace received a telegram from Mrs. Wentworth, telling her not to come. The children were recovering from scarlet fever, and she had better keep away.

When Giffard heard the news that Grace was to remain at the Rectory his delight knew no bounds.

Mary could see the intense satisfaction he felt, and was very miserable indeed. She grew very quiet and sad, and avoided everybody.

Giffard was the first to notice the change in her appearance and told her of it, but he evidently did not suspect that he was the cause of her being so altered.

"How ill you look!" he observed. "Had you not better go to a doctor?"

A doctor! Mary could have laughed in his face. What good could a doctor possibly do to her? Who can minister to a mind diseased?

"You need not be anxious about me, Mr. Ray!" said Mary, proudly. "I assure you I am perfectly well; I never felt better in my life."

Mr. Ray looked at her in surprise. She usually called him Giffard. Why did she speak to him so proudly?

"Have I offended you in any way?" he asked, anxiously, for he was very fond of Mary. He was fond of her, but he loved Grace—that was the difference. Mary wanted his love, his friendship was of no use to her.

"No," replied Mary, and then she hurriedly left the room.

Three weeks passed rapidly away—all too quickly for Giffard, who grew more in love with Grace every day.

Grace was deeply in love with him, but there was a barrier between them—the promise she had made to Clement Dale. She would keep that promise, cost her what it would.

It was a beautiful autumn evening when Grace and Giffard took their last walk together before her return to London, for it would be perfectly safe for her to resume her duties now—so Mrs. Wentworth had told her.

They were sitting side by side on a fallen tree, when Giffard ventured to declare his passion.

"Do you love me, darling?" said Giffard, putting his arm round her waist. "Something tells me, darling, that your hate has turned to love. Say you will be my wife, and make me the happiest man in England?"

"I love you, Giffard," was Grace's frank answer, and then he kissed her again and again.

"Love me, darling? Thank Heaven for that!" he cried, in passionate tones.

"I love you, but I cannot marry you!" she said, struggling out of his arms.

"Cannot marry me! Are you mad, Grace!" said Giffard. "If we love each other, why can we not marry?"

"Because I have made a solemn promise to marry another man if he fulfils the conditions I have imposed upon him."

"Oh! Grace, how could you have made such a rash vow?" said Giffard, reproachfully.

"I did not know that you would love me then," replied Grace.

"Now you know you must break your promise," said Giffard.

"No, no, I will not break my solemn oath!" cried Grace. "I should despise myself. You would despise me if I did."

"Then there is no hope!" said Giffard, despairingly.

"Yes, yes, there is hope!" cried Grace, earnestly. "The promise he has made me I am almost certain he will be unable to fulfil. If, in a month, he does not keep to the agreement he has made I shall be at liberty to marry you."

"You are quite determined to keep your word?" said Giffard, gloomily.

And with all his pleadings he could not shake Grace's resolution. Only one hope remained for Giffard—that his rival would not be able to fulfil the promise he had made.

What was the promise?

He asked Grace this more than once, but she would not tell, and Giffard had to remain in gloomy doubt.

"Did you love the person you are half engaged to?" asked Giffard.

"Love him!"

There was no mistaking the scorn in her voice.

"Then if you never cared for him why did you consent to become his wife on certain conditions?" inquired Giffard, sternly.

"That is my secret," said Grace. "Some day, if things go well, I may tell you all."

"If you marry this man you do not care for," observed Ray, warningly, "your life will be one of bitter regret. Do you know why I went to London, Grace? But I will not tell you. You shall never know the reason unless you become my wife. By-the-by, what is the name of the man—my rival?"

"I will not tell you; you might, in your jealous rage, do him some injury," replied Grace.

"I shall know sooner or later," said Ray.

When they returned to the Rectory, Mary was quite surprised to see how sad and mournful they both looked. She had been quite certain that Grace would come back Ray's affianced wife.

Mary could not help feeling pleased that they were unhappy too; for why should everything

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go well with them, whilst she was so miserable?

It was arranged that Grace should start from the Rectory at a very early hour in the morning, so she did not sit up very late that evening.

Before taking leave of Mary that night Ray asked her to come out into the garden. It was a beautiful tranquil night, and the sky was spangled with a myriad stars. He had decided to take Mary into his confidence.

"Mary," he said, turning to the girl as they stood under the shadow of a large nucifera tree near the gate that led into the lane. "I asked your sister to be my wife to-night."

"And she refused you!" said Mary, hardly able to hide her exaltation.

"She did not exactly refuse me or accept me," replied Ray. "It will all depend upon circumstances if she will be my wife or not."

"Depend upon circumstances!" said Mary, opening her eyes. "I wonder you agreed to such a strange arrangement?"

"I couldn't help myself," said Ray, "for I love Grace dearly, and if I do not win her my life will be a ruined one."

His words were gall and wormwood to Mary. Why did he give his love to Grace. Grace was not a bit better-looking than her, if she were as pretty, which Mary very much doubted. Why could Ray not see this? There were other girls in the world just as lovable as Grace.

"To tell the truth, I don't believe that Grace cares for you at all," said Mary, who wished to make as much mischief as she could. "It is my firm conviction that she is laughing at you. Don't set your heart too deeply on her, for as sure as my name is Fenwick she will play you false."

"For Heaven's sake, don't say that, Mary!" said Ray, turning white to the lips; and without another word he rushed down the lane, Mary looking after him with a bitter smile.

"He is unhappy now as well as me," she mutters, as she leans over the gate. "I hope that something will happen to keep them apart. I will never be my sister's bridesmaid if she stands at the altar with Giffard Ray."

CHAPTER V.

Once more Grace resumed her old life in Bloomsbury-square, and very much changed over her pupils. The doctor declared that they had better not begin study yet, so Grace had nothing to do but to take them out for walks and long drives.

Greatly to her relief Grace saw no sign of Clement Dale. He had completely disappeared for the time being. Mrs. Wentworth told Grace that she had not seen him since she had been away at the Rectory. Everyone was wondering at his strange disappearance.

"I think you have to answer for his absence," declared Mrs. Wentworth, shaking her head knowingly. "You have no doubt rejected his suit, and being thoroughly disheartened, he has gone to some foreign country to try and forget you. You are a very hard-hearted young lady indeed, Miss Grace!"

Grace could have enlightened Mrs. Wentworth had she chosen, but she very wisely kept her own counsel. The girl attributed his disappearance only to one cause. He was working and scheming so continuously that he could find no possible time for going to parties and balls or theatres.

Grace knew Mr. Clement Dale's character quite well. He had an obstinate and tenacious nature, and would not give her up without a struggle. If it were possible for him to do what he boasted, he would obtain the money before twelve o'clock on the last day of October. But was it possible for him to get the money? That was the question Grace asked herself again and again.

Notwithstanding that she had forbidden him to write to her, Grace received letters from Giffard Gay nearly every day. Earnest, pleading letters they were, that often brought

the scalding tears to her eyes. But nothing would shake her resolution. She was determined to be true to her word.

Days went by, and it now wanted only a few hours to the moment when Clement Dale would return home to announce his failure or success.

Grace did not close her eyes on the last night of the month; and when the daylight came streaming into the bedroom looked at it in the greatest dread.

Eight o'clock, nine o'clock, ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, passed slowly away. There was only one hour more, and in that short hour her future fate was to be decided. The suspense was terrible to her. The ticking of the clock on the shelf made her very irritable. She had received a letter from Ray only that morning, so full of love and pathetic despair that it had sent a sharp pain through Grace's heart. Every word in that pleading letter was full of loving tenderness, and the girl's eyes had been filled with tears when she read it.

The girl was too nervously excited to sit down, and she walked slowly to and fro the room, occasionally stopping before the glass to look at her excited face.

She was standing before the glass to see if she looked any different than usual, for she did not wish anyone to notice her excitement, when Mrs. Wentworth entered the room very hurriedly.

"What do you think, dear!" said Mrs. Wentworth. Grace made no reply, but looked at Mrs. Wentworth curiously.

"Well, I will not keep you in suspense," cried Mrs. Wentworth, taking Grace by the hand. "Your old lover is at the door in one of the smartest carriages I have seen!"

Grace turned deadly pale, and looked at the clock. It wanted a quarter to twelve.

"Why, Grace, how startled and ill you look!" said Mrs. Wentworth, in surprise. "You do love Clement Dale, after all!"

"You are quite mistaken, Mrs. Wentworth," said Grace, in agitated tones.

Mrs. Wentworth gave an incredulous smile, and on hearing a step on the stairs passed through a door leading into another room.

It was only natural that Grace should like to be alone with her lover, Mrs. Wentworth told herself, especially after such a long parting. Hardly had Mrs. Wentworth left Grace when, with a triumphant smile, Clement Dale entered the room.

One look at his strange intellectual face was enough for Grace, for she saw by its expression that he had been more than successful.

"Grace," he cried, looking at the girl with his quick, restless eyes. "Congratulate me. You are mine. I have won you, my darling!"

He put his arm round Grace's waist and would have kissed her had not the girl resisted most vigorously, much to his surprise and consternation.

"Why, Grace!" he cried, becoming very serious, and looking quite frightened. "You don't mean to break your word? That would, indeed, be a double deceit."

"I mean to keep the vow I made to you," returned Grace, in a low but clear voice; "but until I am your wife I will not permit you to kiss me."

"We will not be long now, dearest, before we are married—a week at the utmost," said Clement Dale. "The banns are already put up. I took the liberty of doing that a fortnight ago."

Grace looked at him in the greatest amazement, as well she might. He seemed to regard everything in a most practical and business-like manner.

"On your wedding-day the ten thousand pounds I promised you shall be yours," went on Clement Dale; "and then we will go and spend our honeymoon abroad. We will go to some quiet out-of-the-way place."

"When I am married to you I will obey you in everything," replied Grace.

But she could not repress a shudder at the thought.

"I love you too dearly to be very exacting," replied Clement Dale, and looking covertly at his face Grace really believed what he said to be true.

She noticed for the first time that he looked worn and haggard; his face was dreadfully thin, and his brow, which had been smooth only three months ago, was one mass of wrinkles; there were grey hairs to be seen amongst the brown ones. There was a tired, hunted look in his eyes, and Grace felt quite to pity him when she thought of all he had gone through for her sake. But hers was not the pity that was akin to love. No; Grace could never learn to love Clement Dale. It made her feel angry with herself when she observed his altered appearance, for she knew that she had caused him many and many a sleepless night. How he must have plotted and schemed to have succeeded in the great object of his life! And what would be the reward for all his toil and suffering? He would win the hand and not the heart of the woman for whom he would have been willing to have risked a thousand deaths.

Strange as it may appear, it never once occurred to Grace that he had acquired the money in any dishonourable way. It never entered her head that by telling Clement that she would marry him if he were rich that she might be tempting him to some dark and terrible crime in order that he should win her. Of course, she could not help wondering how he had won the money, but she did not like to appear so inquisitive. She would wait until he liked to tell her in his own good time.

"I suppose you see a great change in me," said Clement Dale, with a curious smile; "but if I have lost my good looks, and look old, haggard, and grey-haired, you must remember that I have become so for your dear sake. But I will not tell you all I have suffered to gain my ends. I am sure it would only weary you."

"It was very wrong of me to make such a compact with you," said Grace remorsefully. "I am very sorry, Clement Dale."

"Do not say that, darling!" said Clement. "If it had not been for you I should never have made my fortune. It was the knowledge that if I were successful in winning a fortune that I should win you that urged me on. If I felt weary, if I flagged at any time, I had only to think of your sweet face, and that urged me on."

It is impossible to describe the enthusiastic way in which Clement Dale spoke when he looked at Grace. The haggard, hunted look went from his face, and his grey eyes seemed to gleam.

At this moment there came a knock at the door, much to Grace's relief, and Mrs. Wentworth stood on the threshold.

"Am I intruding?" she asked, hesitatingly. Her curiosity had got the better of her, and she could remain outside the door no longer.

"Oh, not at all!" said Grace, in an eager voice, and Mrs. Wentworth entered the room.

"Let me congratulate you, Mr. Dale!" cried Mrs. Wentworth, as she shook hands with Clement in the most hearty and most demonstrative manner; "for you have won for your future wife the best little girl in the world."

"So I think!" cried Clement Dale promptly, as he stood beside Grace. "At this moment, Mrs. Wentworth, I am the happiest man in the world!"

"So you ought to be!" replied Mrs. Wentworth, thinking that Grace was looking very serious, and wondering why it was so. A young girl when she consents to marry a man of her own free will generally wears a smiling face. But it was not so with Grace.

"The happiest man in the world!" repeated Clement, but the haggard look had returned to his face, and the hunted expression was in his restless eyes.

It was a very long time before Clement took his leave—fully an hour after Mrs. Wentworth had entered the room. How glad Grace was when he shook hands and said good-bye! But one thing annoyed her greatly.

He took advantage of Mrs. Wentworth's presence to kiss her on the forehead. How could she, his affianced bride, make any objection to this? Mrs. Wentworth discreetly turned her eyes the other way.

Immediately after Clement had taken his leave Grace hurried up to her room and flung herself upon the bed. She was really too miserable even to cry, and remained there, listening mechanically to the slightest sound in the street until it was almost time for dinner. At dinner-time she exerted herself to the utmost to appear in the highest spirits, and everyone remarked how wonderfully well she looked that night.

When she again retired to her own room it was for the purpose of writing a letter to her father, informing him of her approaching marriage with Clement Dale.

"I don't care for him very much," her letter concluded; "but he is very rich, and I shall soon be able to help you out of your money troubles, dear papa."

She wrote no letter to Giffard Ray, for she had not the heart to do it. Her father would most certainly tell him the news of her engagement with Clement.

CHAPTER VI.

THE excitement was great next morning when the Rev. Fenwick read out Grace's letter.

Mary was beside herself with delight when she heard that her sister was engaged to be married, for now she stood no longer between Giffard and her. All that day nothing was talked about but the approaching marriage, and Mary wrote to her sister offering to be bridesmaid.

Now that Grace was no longer her rival she felt her old affection return to her heart, and she recalled the many kindnesses her sister had shown to her. Her heart no longer embittered by jealousy she felt really ashamed of her wicked thoughts and the spiteful wishes she had uttered against her sister.

The letter she had written to her sister was the kindest one she had ever penned, and she felt sure that Grace would appreciate it when it reached her.

As she stood watching at the window looking out for Giffard she wondered how he would take the news of Grace's approaching marriage. She knew that it would be a great blow for him, and she had made up her mind to break the news as gently as she could.

He would be grateful for her sympathy, and perhaps, when his grief had gradually worn away, he would turn to her for consolation. Mary devoutly hoped that he would do so. As long as a girl is unmarried a lover, no matter how scornfully he may be treated, will always hope; but marriage puts a fatal barrier between them.

If Giffard Ray is a wise man he will accept the inevitable, and if he cannot marry the girl he loves—well, marry the girl who loves him.

Mary was watching out of the window for Ray to prevent anyone in the house from speaking to him first. She must break the news. It seems strange and almost unnatural to Mary that her sister should reject Giffard.

What could Grace be thinking of to despise the love of Giffard Ray? Was it because his rival was the richer of the two? Was it possible that Grace could weigh gold against the wealth of love that Ray had bestowed upon her?

Mary had not very long to wait before Ray came in sight, and the girl beckoned him to the window, and he came over the grass-plot.

He was quiet and subdued in manner, and evidently was oppressed by some great fear. Having received no letter from Grace he had come to the conclusion that the worst had come to pass, and that his rival, his unknown rival, had kept the promise he had made to Grace.

"You have had news for me?" he said. "I can see it in your face!"

"I always told you what Grace was," replied Mary, gently.

"Then she is going to be married?"

"She will be married in a week."

"Great Heaven!" cried Ray, in a hoarse voice, that told the girl how sharply he felt the blow. "So soon as that?"

For a moment Mary thought that he would fall to the ground in a dead faint, strong man as he was, for he staggered back. The blow was a terrible one for him, although he had half expected it.

Mary came out on to the lawn through the French window. Her eyes were full of sympathy for him, as she took his brown hand in her two little white ones.

"Poor Ray!" she said.

"I want no pity," replied Ray, with a harsh laugh, and he pushed her roughly away. He seemed as though half crazy. She had never seen him like this before. She looked at him reproachfully and rashly, but taking no more notice of her he hurried away.

Giffard Ray was seen no more at the Rectory for three whole days—neither at the Rectory or his own house. They were terrible days for him, days that he looked back at with a shudder in after years. One thought only occupied his mind—Grace was to be married. A few more hours, and Grace would be as though dead to him for ever.

The weather was terribly bad the whole three days; but heedless of this Giffard Ray hurried down muddy lanes, and through dark and dismal woods. The rain came down in torrents, and the wind came in fierce gusts, sweeping the leaves from the almost dismantled trees. He could not eat he could not sleep, but he could drink. A fierce thirst was upon him that nothing could quench. He entered village inns, in which rough labourers were congregated, and listened to their coarse jests, and paid for gallons of drink. They could have floated in it if they had liked; but when the evening came to an end, Giffard Ray, who had drank more than any one in the place, was perfectly sober, while the labourers went off staggering to their homes.

With unkempt hair and wild eyes, Giffard Ray wandered aimlessly along, with one name on his lips, one thought in his heart. His clothes were covered with mud, and he was covered with mud. But he was heedless of this. To tell the truth, he gloried in the wind and rain, and as he looked at the rotting leaves that he trampled under foot he gave vent to loud, incoherent laughter. These brown decaying leaves had once been green and bright, and had made the empty boughs above his head pleasant to the eye, the rustling of the foliage had been music to the listening ear. These decaying leaves seemed symbolic of human hopes and wishes. Like those leaves the young and hopeful would be soon brought low.

At length, after three days of wandering through the foul weather, Ray returned to his home, footsore and haggard. He had not taken off his clothes for three whole days, for the only rest he had had was in some barn or outhouse.

The servant that opened the door to him looked at him in amazement, as well he might, for covered with mud almost from head to foot Giffard Ray looked more like a tramp than a prosperous gentleman. Giffard saw the look of wondering surprise on the man's face, but he heeded it not. What cared he for the opinion of any one now? All the world could think that he was mad if they liked.

All muddy and wet as he was he threw himself upon the bed, not even taking the trouble to take off his boots. He was thoroughly exhausted. Nature could hold out no longer. He fell asleep; but in that sleep he suffered quite as keenly as in his waking moment, for he dreamed of Grace and of her marriage.

When he awoke darkness was coming on.

The sky looked dark and lowering, although it had ceased to rain. The sun was setting, and cast a sickly light over everything. As the evening advanced a damp, unwholesome fog came from the ground, as was to be expected, after three days of continuous rain in November. Through that fog Giffard walked to the Rectory after changing his clothes. He could keep away no longer. He wished to know if Grace had written home again?

Every one at the Rectory was surprised and pleased to see him, and he was invited to take the nearest seat by the fire, for the night was damp and cold. Jack ventured to ask where he had been to, and when he told him he had been walking miles and miles, they looked at him in amazement.

During the evening Grace's name was mentioned many times, and Ray was told that Mary had gone up to town to act as bridesmaid.

Ray listened with dull apathy to all that was said, but all of a sudden he leaped from his chair in fierce anger. The name of Clement Dale had been mentioned.

"Clement Dale!" he cried. "Is Grace going to marry Clement Dale?"

"Then you know him," said the clergyman, looking at him in surprise.

"Know him. Yes, for the greatest scoundrel in the world, and my bitterest enemy."

"You say this because you are jealous of him," said Mr. Fenwick, quickly.

"I am jealous of him," admitted Ray, standing before the fire, "because I love his promised bride. But that is not the reason I call him a scoundrel."

"Let us hear why you use such harsh terms towards him?" said Nicholas Fenwick, mildly.

"I have no time to answer idle questions now," said Ray, buttoning his coat. "I am going to London."

"What for?"

"To stay the marriage."

"You talk like a madman!" said Mr. Fenwick.

"And feel like one too," replied Ray, going towards the door.

"The last train has gone. You cannot go to London to-night," said the clergyman. "There is no reason why you should be in such a hurry. They are not going to be married for two days!"

"It is better for Grace to know everything about Clement Dale at once," said Ray. "Good-night, Mr. Fenwick; I am going to save your daughter from worse than death."

In another moment he was gone, and his footsteps died away in the distance. It was true, as the worthy Rector had said, that the last train had started for London fully half-an-hour ago.

Ray knew this perfectly well, but he also knew that there was a large junction twelve miles away.

He must get there somehow. There were no cabs at Collingford, so Ray had to go to a friendly farmer, and ask him to lend him his cart.

The farmer hesitated at first, for the roads were in such a horrible state; but when Ray told him how important it was for him to get to London as soon as possible, he gave a reluctant consent.

The most unfortunate thing was, however, that there was no one to accompany Ray, and he had very little knowledge of the road he had to take.

It was a miserable ride through the thick fog, and more than once Ray took wrong turnings and had to go back, but by dint of inquiries at cottages and wayside inns he got within three miles of the junction. But now an unexpected difficulty presented itself. The horse, thoroughly exhausted by the bad roads—it had been working all day—either would not or could not proceed one inch further, so Ray had to leave it in charge of the landlord of a public house, and walk the rest of the way.

The lights and signals of the junction looked

provokingly near when Ray could see them, which was only when he was on the summit of a hill.

But at length he reached the station, only, however, in time to see the last train gliding out.

He would have leaped into the train at the risk of his life had not two porters dragged him back.

For a moment he felt inclined to strike them, but restrained himself by a great effort of will, for, after all, the men were only doing their duty; so instead of using violence against them he gave them half-a-crown each, and inquired if they knew where he could put up for the night.

His question was easily answered; and, after finding out the time the earliest train started for London he went to the "Black Horse."

When shown to the room Giffard did not go to bed at once, but sat in an old rickety chair, thinking of the time when he and Clement Dale had been friends.

Giffard Ray was an inexperienced youth when they first met, unversed in the ways of the world.

The other, a man of the world, and a bad one too, had led Ray into all kinds of follies and dissipations, and was answerable for almost all the sins which Ray had committed in his wild youth, and which he now looked back upon with such bitter and unavailing regret.

Let the crowning act of Clement Dale's villainy be told.

In order to screen himself from the consequences of a crime he had committed the vile wretch had made a false accusation against Giffard Ray, and had it not been for the merest accident in the world he would have been sentenced to a long term of penal servitude.

Ray was perfectly certain that Clement Dale had committed the crime of which he had accused him; but at the time he had not been able to bring proof against him.

But a few weeks ago he had been called to the bedside of a dying man, who confessed that Clement and he had been guilty of the crime of which he, Ray, had been accused.

So many years had intervened since the accusation and the trial that Ray had determined not to punish Clement Dale for his treachery. He had been almost inclined to burn the papers.

However, now that Clement Dale was about to marry Grace, the papers in Ray's possession would come in useful.

Can it be wondered at that Giffard Ray hated Clement Dale?

His face grew hard and stern, and he clenched his fist, muttering,—

"At last, Clement Dale, we shall meet again, face to face!"

Giffard Ray was on the platform at five o'clock, long before it was daylight; and a few minutes afterwards was in the train bound for London. All the way up he was thinking how he could break the news to Grace.

How glad she would be to be released from this man! She had never loved him. How delighted she would feel to escape from being the wife of such a villain!

There was one great fear at Giffard's heart.

What if Clement Dale had altered the wedding day, and Grace was already married to him? This thought made Giffard turn deathly pale, so pale that a fellow-passenger asked him if he were ill.

Even if Grace were his wife, he had the power of going with a detective and taking him away to prison.

It was ten o'clock when the train steamed into a London station, and Giffard Ray at once took a cab to Bloomsbury-square.

On inquiring for Grace at Mrs. Wentworth's house, he was calmly informed by a very pretty servant that she had gone away two days before.

"Where had she gone to?" Giffard asked eagerly, so eagerly that the girl looked at him in surprise.

"I do not know where Miss Grace has gone," the girl replied.

Beside himself with terror, and with a dark foreboding at his heart, Ray demanded to see Mrs. Wentworth. His request was at once complied with.

In a few words as possible Ray explained the object of his visit, and asked Mrs. Wentworth to tell him where Grace resided.

Mrs. Wentworth confessed that she knew very well where Grace was staying, but she flatly refused to make him acquainted with the address. He asked her pointedly her reason, and she replied that Mary had told her that Clement Dale had a rival named Giffard Ray, and that, in all probability, he would come and try and persuade Grace to break off her marriage. So, in order to prevent such a contingency, Grace and her sister had taken lodgings some distance from Bloomsbury-square, and would remain there until her marriage morn.

"Then she is not married? Thank Heaven for that!" said Giffard Ray. "I swear to Heaven that I will part them yet!"

Mrs. Wentworth smiled incoherently as she listened to Giffard's extravagant language.

"If you were not in love I should think you a madman!" she said.

"Mrs. Wentworth," cried Ray, earnestly, "if you have any love for Grace you will tell me her address. I wish to save her from a life of misery—to prevent her marriage with a villain!"

"You call him a villain because he is your successful rival!" said Mrs. Wentworth, and there was contempt in her tone. "You have no right to blacken the character of Clement Dale because he is engaged to the woman you love."

Giffard Ray made no reply, but rushed out of the house, and jumped into the cab that was waiting for him.

He had only four-and-twenty hours to find Grace, and in a great city like London. It was like looking for a needle in a bottle of hay! In twenty-four hours Clement Dale and Grace would be standing side by side at the altar rails!

CHAPTER VII.

WHICH of them should Ray endeavour to trace out—Clement Dale or Grace Fenwick? This was what Ray asked himself as the cab dashed along.

At length he came to the conclusion that there would be more chance of discovering Clement Dale than Grace, and made up his mind that he would not leave a stone unturned to find him out.

If Clement Dale had been an honourable man he would have disliked him for taking Grace from him, but now he positively hated him as he had never believed he could hate a fellow-creature. How dare this crime-stained man marry a poor and innocent creature like Grace!

When evening came on Ray had not found out either Grace's or Clement's whereabouts, and he wandered aimlessly about the streets, feeling more and more every moment how hopeless his task was.

At length he betook himself to Scotland-yard, and soon explained the object of his visit.

"Clement Dale," said the detective, who happened to be in the room, "he is wanted already for the great diamond robbery—the cleverest robbery I have ever heard of. He was never suspected until to-day. Do you know where he can be found, sir?"

"Unfortunately I do not," replied Ray. "I wish I did; for without he is arrested before twelve o'clock to-morrow, he will be married to a young girl I take a great interest in."

"I see," said the detective. "Do you happen

to know if he is to be married in a church or a registrar's office?"

"No," said Ray.

"Anyway, he has not left the country, and I shall be sure to catch him!" cried the detective.

"But will you arrest him before twelve o'clock?" asked Ray, anxiously.

It was life and death to him, and he listened anxiously for the man's answer.

"This Clement Dale has plenty of money," observed the detective; "and, thinking that no one is aware of his guilt in regard to the diamonds, will most likely get married in some swell West-end church. It will be easy to find out which one it is. Besides, an inquiry can be made at every registrar's office in London. No, he can't escape us now—not a bit of it!"

Notwithstanding the confident assurances of the policeman, Ray felt very uneasy in his mind. If, by the slightest oversight, the police should make a mistake, Grace might still become Clement's wife before he was arrested.

He was in a terribly nervous state, and he felt quite bewildered; unable to think or speak coherently. Once more he returned to Bloomsbury-square, and once more he was refused Grace's address, and Mrs. Wentworth told him plainly that if he did not leave her house at once she would have him expelled from it. He gave such a fierce glance of rage that she recoiled from him in fear; and he with a muttered oath dashed down the stairs.

A boy with a parcel in his hand was talking to the servant, and Ray heard him say,—

"Please will you give this to Miss Fenwick. I was told to wait for the money."

"Miss Fenwick don't live here now," replied the servant, while, in order to have some excuse for listening, Ray stood at the bottom of the steps lighting a cigar.

"But the young lady ordered these things a week ago," replied the boy, "and gave this address. What am I to do?"

"I'll go and ask my mistress," said the girl. "Very likely she will tell you what to do."

The boy thanked the servant, and began whistling while the girl went upstairs.

"Very likely she will tell him the address she refused me," thought Ray, walking a little way from the house. "Anyway, I'll interview the boy, and find out what Mrs. Wentworth tells him to do."

In a few moments the boy came whistling along the pavement, with the package still under his arm.

"Where are you going to take that parcel?" asked Ray, abruptly.

"What is that to you?" said the boy, bluntly.

"Come, tell the truth. Are you going to take that parcel back to the shop, or to another address? Answer the question, and you shall have half-a-crown."

"To another address," said the boy, holding out his hand.

"What is the address?" said Ray, impatiently.

The boy told him what he desired so much to know. It was not so very far from the square in which he was standing. Quickly Ray called a passing hansom, and bade the boy jump in. After a moment's hesitation, and a keen scrutiny of Ray's face, the boy did as desired.

In ten minutes the cab stopped before the house in which Grace resided. How quickly Ray's heart beat! His hand trembled so that he had great difficulty to open his purse to pay the cabman. By the time he had settled with him the boy had knocked at the door, and was handing in the parcel.

"I wish to see Miss Fenwick on important business," said Ray, and he spoke in such a commanding way that without a moment's hesitation the landlady led him up the stairs, taking care, however, to ask his name.

"Mr. Ray!" said the woman, opening a door, and there was a startled cry in the room

—a cry that had come from the heart of Grace Fenwick.

She rose from a chair as Ray entered the room, looking white and agitated, and saying in a low voice,—

"Oh, Giffard, this is cruel!"

"I have traced you out in spite of all your precautions," said Ray, taking her hand in his.

Mary was in the room, sitting on a low stool. She could only look with her dark eyes at Ray. She was too surprised to speak.

"You shouldn't have come here, Giffard," said Grace, sadly. "For Heaven's sake go. I will not listen to reproaches."

"Grace, Grace! I have come to save you."

"To save me?" said Grace.

"Yes, yes, to save you from that villain, Clement Dale."

"Remember, Giffard, that you are speaking of my future husband," said Grace, with quiet dignity. "It is not for me to listen in silence to such language."

"You must—you shall listen," said Ray, sternly.

Grace put her fingers to her ears, but he dragged her hands thus forcibly away. The girl looked at the man's white, determined face, and saw that she had met with her master. With a weary sigh she sank back into a chair.

"I will listen to all you have to say," she said, not daring to glance at Ray again.

"You must not listen to a word," said Mary. "What would Clement Dale say if he found you and your old sweetheart together?"

But neither Grace nor Ray took any notice of Mary's words, for the young man was telling her as quickly and coherently as he could in his excitement all about Clement Dale's villainy; how he had nearly contrived to get Ray accused of a crime, and finally the story of the diamond robbery.

When he had finished, Grace, with tearful, grateful eyes, told him of her gratitude, and then he took her in his arms and kissed her again and again. He was just in the act of pressing a fervent kiss on her ruby lips when the door opened, and Clement entered the room.

Their backs were turned; they did not see him. For a moment or two he stood in the doorway looking like one utterly turned to stone.

"Here is Clement Dale!" cried Mary, who had caught sight of him.

"The warning comes too late," said Clement, advancing into the room. "I have seen quite enough to convince me that Grace Fenwick is a traitress. Take your arms from that scoundrel's neck, woman, and let me give him the thrashing he deserves."

He raised his stick in the air as he spoke, his face convulsed with rage.

"You are the scoundrel!" cried Ray, turning round and confronting him.

The look of passion died away from Clement's face as he recognised Ray, giving place to one of terror. The stick dropped from his nerveless hands, and with a wild cry he rushed from the room.

Ray would have started in pursuit had not Grace clung to him tightly.

"Be merciful, Ray!" she cried. "If he can escape from the police let him do so. You shall have no hand in his arrest."

"He cannot escape!" said Ray. "The police are on his track. Every part will be watched, and every policeman will be on the look-out for the great diamond robber."

Grace gave a startled cry as a sharp report was heard in the street, the report of a pistol. Ray rushed to the window and flung it wide open, and the girls and the man looked out.

On the ground beneath the window lay Clement Dale. By the light of the gas-lamp they saw his ghastly face and half-a-dozen policemen gathered round him, and a crowd of civilians were hurrying up from all directions.

Clement Dale had shot himself to avoid imprisonment.

"The diamonds will never be found," were

his last words. "I have hidden them where no one will think of looking."

The scene was a horrible one. And as Clement Dale fell back dead Ray caught Grace in his arms, for she had fainted right away.

So long was Grace in recovering from her fainting fit that a doctor was sent for, and when he saw her he shook his head gravely, and said the shock had been too much for her nerves.

For many days all was a weary blank for Grace; and Ray watched by her bedside in the greatest anxiety in company with Mary, who, now that she was almost at death's door, forgot her love for Ray in her anxiety for her sister.

If she only recovered from her illness Mary would never be envious or jealous of her again, she told herself.

When Grace was declared to be out of danger the papers had ceased to dilate upon the extraordinary diamond robbery.

The inquest had taken place upon Clement Dale's body, and it was long ago buried in a quiet churchyard in his native place, near to a village where an old aunt who loved him dearly lived.

He had treated her most ungratefully, had rewarded her kindness with the blackest villainy; but she loved him still, and often afterwards she was seen placing a bunch of flowers or a wreath on that felon's grave.

As for the diamonds that he had stolen—it was as he said. He had concealed them so well in some mysterious place, that, in spite of every effort, they could not be discovered, and remain undiscovered till this day. But no doubt, in the course of years, they will come to light, and let us hope that they will fall into the possession of deserving hands.

It is scarcely necessary for us to tell the inquiring reader that Grace and Ray are now married; but it is necessary to add that Ray, having come into some money from an almost forgotten relation, is now living in luxury and ease at Fenwick Hall with his young and beautiful wife.

[THE END.]

ENGAGEMENT RINGS.—A French writer says: "Do not choose the ruby; it is too showy, loud and indiscreet. Good taste inclines toward the sapphire and diamond, of which it is said, one does not look well without the other. Do not choose a large sapphire surrounded by diamonds, but ask your jeweller to interlace in happy combination the sapphire and the diamond. The turquoise is also a tasteful stone, but when it is constantly worn it has the immense disadvantage to change colour, and to this change most women attach a sad and sentimental superstition. It should not, therefore, be chosen for the first present, which is to be worn and cherished while life lasts, which remains from the days of youth, while everything else changes."

THE SNAIL HARVEST.—In France, snails are called "the poor man's oysters." They are so appreciated that Paris alone consumes about forty-nine tons daily, the best kind coming from Grenoble or Burgundy. The finest specimens are carefully reared in a snail-park, such as the poor Capuchin monks planned in bygone days at Colmar and Weinbach, when they had no money to buy food, and so cultivated snails. But the majority are collected by the vine-dressers, in the evening, from the stone-heaps where the snails have assembled to enjoy the dew. The creatures are then starved in a dark cellar for two months, and when they have closed up the aperture of their shell are ready for cooking. According to the true Burgundy method, they are boiled in five or six waters, extracted from the shell, dressed with fresh butter and garlic; then replaced in the shell, covered with parsley and bread-crumbs, and finally simmered in white wine.

FACETIÆ.

LADY (to servant, whom she is about to engage): "Those are my conditions; do they suit you?" Servant: "H'm! I'll see. I always take ladies on trial."

"CAN I negotiate a loan?" said a seedy-looking chap, as he entered a bank. "Yes, you can negotiate alone. At least you can't negotiate with us."

A LITTLE girl went timidly in a shop, and asked the shopman how many shoestrings she could get for a penny. "How long do you want them?" he asked. "I want them to keep," was the answer, in a tone of slight surprise.

Tommy went fishing the other day without permission of his mother. Next morning a neighbour's son met him, and asked: "Did you catch anything yesterday, Tommy?" "Not till I got home," was the rather sad response.

A CHILD, while walking through an art gallery with her mother, was attracted by a statue of Minerva. "Who is that?" said she. "My child, that is Minerva, the goddess of wisdom." "Why didn't they make her husband too?" "Because she had none, my child." "That was because she was wise, wasn't it, mamma?" was the artless reply.

ONE WAS QUITE ENOUGH.—"No," said the henpecked husband, as he scratched his bald head. "I am not a believer in Mormonism, not by a long chalk." "Why not," asked the Mormon sympathizer, with whom he was conversing. "Because," replied the henpecked man, "I don't believe in a man having two wives. No man can serve two mistresses."

HOW SODA-WATER TASTED.—It was Freddy's first experience with soda-water. Drinking his glass with perhaps undue eagerness, he was aware of a tingling sensation in his nostrils. "How do you like it?" inquired his mother, who had stood treat. Freddy thought a moment, winking his nose as he did so, and then observed: "It tastes like your foot was asleep."

CAUSE FOR KILLING.—A wag who is often merry over his personal plainness tells the story of himself: "I went to a chemist the other day for a dose of morphine for a sick friend. The assistant objected to give it to me without a prescription, evidently fearing that I intended to commit suicide. 'Pshaw,' said I, 'do I look like a man who would kill himself?' Gazing steadily at me for a moment, he replied: 'I don't know. It seems to me if I looked like you I should be greatly tempted to kill myself.'"

JONES was looking around a picture exhibition with an artist friend, who had the good luck to have one of his pictures receive an "honourable mention." "Show me," he said, "the successful painting." "There it is, the portrait of a lady." "Oh! charming as to execution, but how did you come to get hold of such an ugly model?" "Why, it happens to be my mother," replied the artist. "Your mother!" exclaimed poor Jones, greatly embarrassed. "Dear me! You must pardon me; and still, if I hadn't been such a stupid, I might have recognised it. Why, you're as alike as two peas!"

BAD BUTTER.—"Mr. Flipkins," said Widow Cushman, his landlady, "I do wish when you take pay in trade from your country subscribers, that you would be more careful and not allow them to palm off bad butter on you. I lost two boarders this morning, owing to your not tasting that butter last night before you brought it home." "What butter? I didn't bring home any butter." "Why, that box of butter you left on the window seat in the dining-room. Clairette found it after you had gone upstairs." "Great heaven! You didn't use that for butter, did you? I hunted high and low for that box and thought I had lost it. It was a box of axle-grease. Farmer Dobbin asked me to buy and send to him by express."

SOCIETY.

THE PRINCE OF WALES AT INVERCAULD.—His Royal Highness's stay extended over the greater part of a week. Deer drives in the neighbouring forests were arranged, and a large party met His Royal Highness. After leaving Invercauld the Prince stayed for a day or two with the Earl of Fife, at Mar Lodge, and went deer-stalking in Mar Forest.

The stay of the Court at Balmoral depends on Princess Beatrice's health, which at present is all that could be wished. Her *accouchement* is expected about the middle of November at farthest, and will take place at Windsor. The Queen is anxious to get the journey over as soon as practicable. Her Majesty will be present at the event, under any circumstances.

The Grand Duke of Hesse, with his daughters Irene and Alice, have been visitors at Balmoral for a short time. Rumours are afloat that the visit is partly connected with the matrimonial prospects of the young ladies.

The health of Queen Christina of Spain, says *Modern Society*, has been seriously affected by the disturbing events in Madrid of the past week or so. The poor little woman left the throne, which she is trying so pluckily to hold for her son, totter beneath her feet, and in her anguish, she is said to have fled to her oratory and prayed long and wildly for the protection and support of Heaven. Then she betook herself again to her children and clasped the infant king again and again to her breast, still murmuring agitated petitions to the Blessed Virgin. Never since her husband's death has she been in such sore distress. But upon her arrival in Madrid from La Granja, she laid aside the weak woman, and became a Queen, and while with her Ministers displayed the coolness of a man.

St. Paul's Church, Knightsbridge, was filled with a fashionable congregation to witness the marriage of Viscount Stopford, eldest son of the Earl of Courtown, to Miss Gertrude Mills, eldest daughter of General and Mrs. Charles Mills.

The bride was followed to the altar by six bridesmaids, dressed in pretty costumes of white muslin with *moiré* silk sashes, and white hats trimmed with gold braid and feathers. Each carried a basket of white and pink flowers, and wore a pearl shamrock brooch, the gifts of the bridegroom. The bride was attired in a costume of white duchesse satin trimmed with Brussels lace and small sprays of orange blossom, Brussels lace veil and diamond ornaments.

Lord and Lady Londonderry made their first public appearance as the "Lord and Lady Lieutenant" of Ireland at Baldoyle autumn races. The Marchioness of Londonderry was dressed in a grey costume, trimmed with velvet; a grey hat with white wings; a mantle to match, trimmed with chinilla, and wore in addition a sable muff and boa, and heavy dark blue Connemara cloak, the hood of which was lined with crimson. Lady Alexandrina Vane Tempest wore a costume of olive-brown vicuña, the tight-fitting jacket bordered with dark fur, and an olive-brown hat with red wings.

Lady Eva Wyndham Quin had a dress of brown and heliotrope stripes, and dark brown hat with large heliotrope bow. Lady Ardilaun wore a dress of black cashmere, the front panel richly embroidered, a tight fitting crimson jacket and black hat, with red trimmings. The Countess of Fingall and her sister, Miss Bourke, were in black dresses and hats, with grey covert jacket. Lady Katharine Wobley wore a dress of black yak lace, a black bonnet and handsome broché velvet mantle.

Lady Power had a costume of black faille with jet trimming, and a black hat. Her sister, Miss Segrave, wore a dark blue tailor-made costume, and a hat to correspond, with white wings.

STATISTICS.

RECENTLY published records show that there are 725,000 more females than males in this country.

RAISINS.—In ten years the consumption of raisins and currants in France has increased from about 6,000 tons annually to 65,000 tons. They are used in the manufacture of wine, which is said to be perfectly wholesome.

SIZE OF HAIRS.—Measurements have shown the thickness of the human hair to vary from the two-hundred-and-fiftieth to the six-hundredth part of an inch. The silk-worm's thread is one five-thousandth of an inch thick, and the spider's web only one thirty-thousandth. Blonde hair is the finest, and red the coarsest. Taking four heads of hair of equal weight, a patient German physiologist found the red one to contain about 90,000 hairs; the black, 103,000; the brown, 109,000; and the blonde, 140,000.

PAPER.—The consumption of paper and the volume of its manufacture are sometimes taken as standards of civilization. The United States has 894 paper mills and 1,106 paper machines. Germany has 869 mills and 891 machines; France 420 mills and 525 machines; England 361 mills, 541 machines; Scotland 69 mills, 98 machines; Ireland 13 mills, 13 machines; Russia 133 mills, 137 machines; and Austria 220 mills, 270 machines. The average annual production of paper in all countries is estimated at 2,800,000 tons—a quantity which fairly entitles the present age to be called the age of paper.

GEMS.

THE best preparation for the future is to drain the present of every good thing it holds.

THE moral law is written on the tablets of eternity. For every false word or unrighteous deed, for cruelty or oppression, for lust or vanity, the price has to be paid at last.

WHERE necessity ends, desire and curiosity begin, and no sooner are we supplied with everything nature can demand, than we sit down to contrive artificial appetites.

FAME is an undertaker that pays but little attention to the living, but bedizens the dead, furnishes out their funerals and carries them to the grave.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SPONGE CAKE.—Four eggs, their weight in pulverized sugar, the weight of two eggs in flour. Beat the eggs and sugar well together for a quarter of an hour. Then lightly stir in the flour, taking care not to beat the mixture again, only to stir it together. Add a few drops of any essence, and bake in a buttered tin for half or three-quarters of an hour.

CRAB-APPLE PRESERVE.—Select perfect ones; pour boiling water over them, which removes the skin; lay them in water enough to cover them; let them simmer slowly until soft; take them out and drain; make a clear syrup, pound for pound; boil them in it till clear, lay them on dishes to cool, and place them in jars; cook the syrup a little longer, and pour it over the apples when hot; seal.

FRIED CAULIFLOWER.—Fried cauliflower must be served hot. Clean and wash the cauliflower well, parboil in salt and water, and cut in small pieces. Make a batter of three table-spoonfuls of flour, with two yolks of eggs and cold water or milk enough to make a thin paste, adding half a teaspoonful of olive oil and a little salt, mixing well. Beat the white of the eggs to a stiff froth, and mix with the rest. Dip the pieces of the cauliflower in the batter and fry in hot fat. Take them out of the pan with a skimmer, turn them in a warm colander, and sprinkle salt over them, serving hot.

MISCELLANEOUS.

HARD-WORKED GERMAN WOMEN.—Much has been written in the German press of late about the over-working of female employes in the various branches of the public service. Judging from the statements published, it would, indeed, seem as though a speedy reform were urgently needed. Female telegraphists are working for monthly wages of four pounds, a rate at which their male competitors positively scorn to engage themselves, especially since the weaker sex are required to work not only more hours per day, but to supply gratuitously the places of those of their sisters who are allowed a furlough of some days now and then. Another instance is that of the female employes in the Berlin Tramway Company, to the number of forty, all single women, and taken from the cultivated class of society, who are compelled to do hard and exhaustive service at a monthly pay of two pounds ten shillings, and only after long years may aspire to the maximum allowance of four pounds five shillings. These women, except in cases of serious indisposition temporarily incapacitating them for work, and duly certified to by a medical superintendent, are never given a real furlough, since in every instance they have to supply a substitute at their own expense. In view of these and similar cases, it would appear as though Germany might be a fertile soil for the advocates of woman suffrage, which latter might more readily secure redress for the wrongs inflicted by the male taskmasters.

A DANISH COUNTRY-SEAT.—We spent a day at a country-seat about an hour out of town, says a recent traveller, where we found in perfection this charming combination of simplicity and luxury. The house was old and built around three sides of a court-yard as large as a public square. A delightfully irregular house of uneven growth; some rooms moderately large and opening together, while others were really great halls, many opening out by stone balconies and steps to the rich velvety green of old lawns running down to the sandy beach of the blue Baltic. Trees of age and beauty that it made one glad to see were everywhere about this domain, while back of it lay a famous beech wood and deer park. This we visited in a little basket waggon, driving among the tame deer. The beeches were of immense size and very old. Their strange weird trunks covered with whitish bark made them phantom-like in the green dusk of the forest. This wood was only a part of the royal deer forest. Mr. S.—recently bought it from the crown, giving eighty thousand pounds sterling for this addition to his old estate, which had a long frontage on the Baltic. For a fishing village on his estate he had built a fine breakwater. Our Danish friends were intimate here, and told us of the good providence the whole family were to their tenants and people. At dinner the fish was from their own waters, the venison and birds from their own forests, the luscious peaches and grapes from their own glass-houses, and the flowers were from their fields as well as those cultivated. To us, accustomed only to the unbroken green of our wheat-fields—corn, as it is called in England—the gay beauty of north European corn flowers in a wheat-field is something fascinating. I had said something of this pleasure to the eye as we had travelled northward. In one room, where a pale blue glazed chintz covered the walls as well as the furniture, and the light was softened by abundant white muslin curtains, a large window was filled by a tall basket stand with its tiers of trays filled entirely by blue corn flowers, relieved by borders of the loveliest white roses; and in the next room, where everything was pale pink, the wild sweetbrier was the only flower. Great vases of fine china and majolica had the poppy and ripe wheat with blue and yellow corn flowers everywhere. My friends told me the sisters, three girls of remarkable beauty, had themselves arranged the flowers to please me.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LINA.—You write a very nice hand, but if it were larger it would be more fashionable.

A. B. G.—You will obtain the desired information at the American Exchange, 440, West Strand, London.

RIGHTON.—Very fashionable. The colour depends on the complexion. Ask a lady friend what would suit you.

A. VOTUM.—Possibly you are right, but we cannot enter into the question in these columns. Write to the editor of a daily paper.

CAMBERLAND.—The monthly parts are published on the 15th of every month. Part 292 on 15th September. See notice at foot of correspondence column.

"TWO YEARS' READER."—1. Any chemist will tell you it varies slightly according to circumstances. 2. Not perhaps too young, but quite young enough. 3. Fair composition and writing.

L. D. S.—1. The term penny, when used to mark the size of nails, is supposed to be a corruption of pound. Thus, a four-penny nail was such that 1,000 of them weighed four pounds; a ten-penny such that 1,000 weighed ten pounds. 2. The making of nails dates as far back as the art of working metals.

L. PERK.—Saul, the first king of Israel had four, according to some writers six, sons, three of whom, including Jonathan, the intimate friend of David, fell with their father in their battle against the Philistines at Mount Gilboa. He had also two daughters, Merab, the first born, and Michal, the wife of David.

C. D. D.—Suppose you turn your attention to wood-carving. You are crippled by the skating-rink accident—and will not be able to walk for a year or more. You want occupation, and think plaque-painting and embroidery overdone. You live in a well-wooded country, and can get plenty of samples to experiment on, and if you become an adept, you can find sale for your work.

H. H. S.—The Dry Tortugas, a group of ten islets or keys forming part of Florida, at the extremity of the Florida Keys, lie just within the Gulf of Mexico. The islets, which are of coral formation, are low and barren, except where partly covered with mangrove bushes. On Bush or Garden Key is Fort Jefferson, which was used during the American War as a penal station for Confederate prisoners.

B. B. K.—Let the matter rest, and take the lesson of it to heart. You yielded to the temptation to flirt with a stranger and a man, handsome, but not a well-bred and refined gentleman. He said coarse things to you, and now you ask must I not tell my husband and have him call the man to account. No, the fault is yours. Repel the man firmly yourself and do not make a bad thing worse by involving your husband in a difficulty.

C. E. M.—To make ginger-beer (two gallons) put two gallons of cold water into a pot upon the fire; add to it two ounces of good ginger, bruised, and two pounds of white or brown sugar. Let all this come to a boil, and continue boiling for about half an hour. Then skim the liquor and pour it into a jar or tub, along with one sliced lemon and half an ounce of cream of tartar. When nearly cold put in a teaspoonful of yeast to cause the liquor to work. The beer is now made; and after it has worked for two days, strain and bottle it for use. Tie down the corks firmly.

EDITH.—The best way to make yourself attractive is not to seek to shine, be attentive without being obtrusive, and don't flirt. Men are apt rather to seek those who require courting than those who meet them halfway. Surely at your age you need not despair, or even consider that you have one foot on the shelf. Remember the old adage, and a pretty one too—

"There never yet was goose so grey,
But some day, soon or late;
Some honest gander came that way,
And took her for his mate."

LIBERTY.—You are too young to receive "beaus." It is better to be spending the time in study. Your letter is not as good in point of grammar and spelling as it should be, though the writing is fine and firm and shows character. It is probable you could make yourself a cultivated woman—a pleasure to yourself and your friends if you would. Tie the go-by to love and coquetry for the next three golden years. If the stories told your cousin by your treacherous friend were "lies" as you say, then they will eventually be found out. She will fall of her design.

LITTLE PET.—You are right in saying that one of the best accomplishments a girl or boy can have is to be a clever and charming letter-writer. A good idea for a "home teacher of five—three girls and two boys," would be to have a post-office box—a cigar box prettily decorated will do—and require your flock to write letters to each other and to yourself every day, and drop them in the box. Be careful to have the letters well written and punctuated, but encourage them to write in an easy off-hand way about the everyday happenings, readings, &c. Now and then you could require more formal letters—also the short cut business letter which they say women cannot write. Don't do away with the post-script, except to formal and business letters. We have a friend who says he enjoys the post-script of a letter more than the body of it. "It is," he says, "as though he were eating strawberries from a basket, and thought all the berries were eaten up, and should then find the largest and sweetest at once in some niche at the bottom of the basket."

R. S.—Tokens and coins of the date stated are not in demand at present.

G. A. C.—Between very intimate friends it is immaterial who bows first, the lady or the gentleman.

BROTHERTON.—To relieve your anxiety, you might dispose of the property by will; but it would be better to consult a lawyer upon the subject.

N. H. S.—M. signifies Maelzel's metronome, an instrument consisting of a pendulum (which may be shortened or lengthened at will), set in motion by clock-work, for the purpose of determining by its vibrations the exact movements of musical compositions. M. M. half note 88 signifies that by Maelzel's metronome set at 88 marks the value of the half note.

LAURINA.—The Nile is the principal river of Africa, and one of the largest and most famous rivers of the world. The name is of Semitic origin, and is applied to rivers that periodically overflow and irrigate their banks. The water of the river is charged with mud, which it deposits over the cultivated land of Egypt to an average depth of not more than the twentieth part of an inch each year.

W. R. L.—The manuscript of the poem "To a Skeleton" which appeared during the first quarter of the present century, was said to have been found in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons in London, near a perfect human skeleton, and to have been sent by the curator to the *Morning Chronicle* for publication. It excited so much remark that every effort was made to discover its origin, and a reward of fifty guineas was offered in vain for the name of the author.

WILLIE'S WIFE.

Willie's wife is a winsome thing,
Full of engaging ways;
And Willie's heart is ready to sing
A canticle in her praise.
She is youthful and gay, and so
Eager to wander to and fro,
She seems to fancy an idle life
Is best adapted to Willie's wife.

Every day, like an honest lad,
From early morning till late,
Willie cheerfully toils to add
To the wealth of his pretty mate.
Hard his labour, and small his gains,
At which the little woman complains,
Who ought to feel it the pride of her life
That she was chosen as Willie's wife.

Willie is gentle and kind, and true,
And not much given to roam,
And does the very best he can do
To add to the joys of home;
But Willie's wife, it is sad to see,
Is not the helpmate she ought to be,
And Willie over his tasks must bend,
To get enough money for her to spend.

The little woman is laying up
A store of grief and remorse,
And sorrow will soon embitter her cup,
Unless she changes her course;
For Willie may struggle to roll up wealth,
And lose his courage, and lose his health,
And loving union give way to strife,
And the chief one to blame will be Willie's wife.

J. P.

A. V. V.—It is difficult to tell a person what a thing is, unless he has had personal experience of it. Perhaps you remember the sad fate of the missionary who attempted to describe ice to the Eastern desert who had never known a temperature less than sixty degrees. The desert, not being able to understand how water could become solid, thought the missionary had told him false about ice, and had him beheaded. If you had never tasted sugar, or anything else that was sweet, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to tell you what sugar is, so that you would understand it.

EDITH F.—The passion-flower was so named because of a fancied resemblance in different parts of the flower to various articles connected with the "passion" or crucifixion of the Saviour. The five anthers (the tips of the stamens) symbolise the five wounds; the three styles (three of pistils) the three nails; the column on which the ovary (a hollow case or covering) is elevated, the pillar of the cross; the fleshy threads within the flowers, the crown of thorns; and the calyx (the outer covering of a flower) the nimbus (rays of light around the heads of divinities). 2. Passion signifies, in one sense, a suffering or enduring; hence, specifically, the suffering of Christ.

LADYBIRD.—You are right. Don't wear "any old things" if you can help it. You will look and feel downy, and you want to get all the good out of your trip. Get yourself a navy-blue flannel dress—nothing keeps its own like navy-blue flannel—light it up with crimson. Get a gentleman's straw hat—also carry a common shade hat. Take a long flannel or cashmere wrapper, and some grey linen aprons. Instead of collars and cuffs, take some canvas strips to make fresh ruffling for your throat and wrists. Take a "housewife" well supplied with needles and thread, and some bits of the material of your dress in case of rents. Leave all ribbons and jewellery. Have stout walking-shoes, dark stockings, and a pair of slippers. They are quite nice in camps in these days of progress. They are even luxurious, though freedom, ease, and unconventionality reign.

ROSE.—It is not our practice to give business addresses.

WATTIE.—"A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance" will be found in Proverbs, chapter xv, verse 13; and "Judge not according to the appearance" in John, chapter vii, verse 54.

T. P. S.—We know of no government that offers a reward for the discovery of perpetual motion. As far back as 1795 the Academy of Science at Paris resolved not to consider any future proposal on the subject.

LIZZIE F.—To cure the bites of insects dissolve one ounce of borax in one pint of water that has been boiled and allowed to cool. The bites are to be dabbed with the solution as long as there is any irritation.

SARAH D.—No, it is not right to have your divorced husband seeing you constantly and intimately. Make him stay away or else get a license and remarry you. Divorced parties often remarry. Old ties are hard to break—particularly where there are children.

A. B. C.—Bristol brick is a kind of brick used for cleaning steel. It was manufactured for some years exclusively in Bristol. A small vein of the steel required for this purpose was found near Liverpool, but was soon exhausted.

C. C. H.—The Buddhist cave temple at Carlee, Hindostan, is hewn from the face of a precipice, about two-thirds of the way up a steep hill which rises 800 feet above the plain. The length of the temple is 180 feet; width 40 feet. The interior has a double row of sculptured pillars, terminating in a semicircle. The only object of devotion to be seen is the mystical chaitan or umbrella. The temple has a high arched roof, which with its pillars gives it the appearance of a Gothic cathedral.

S. H. M.—1. What is called "ebonite" is made out of India-rubber and sulphur heated much hotter than soft vulcanised rubber. This is made into thinblades, stamps, canes, combs, surgical instruments, and a great variety of other things. 2. Vulcanising rubber is done by mixing it with sulphur, and then heating the mixture, when the two unite into one substance. 3. Rubber is dissolved in gas-tar oil, turpentine, ether, chloroform, naphtha, and petroleum. Various machines, calenders, moulds, &c., are necessary for the manufacture of India-rubber articles.

EDNA.—A young lady twenty years old ought to have sufficient judgment to manage such a case without much difficulty, unless your sister is so very unruled as to be an exception to girls in general. You might let her come to your class on trial, and if she proved unmanageable your mother could withdraw her from the school. It would not matter how she addressed you, so long as she was respectful. Too great particularity as to such trifles on your part would tend to render your little sister uneasy, and make her seemingly disobedient when she in fact had no intention of being at all refractory.

DORINA.—A runaway match is certainly to be avoided if possible. It is so much sweeter to have the good will and blessing of the "old folks." There are various ways you might try to win the favour of the young lady's mother. Lola Montes was quite a famous female of this century. She was a dancer, an actress, a lecturer—the favourite and real prime minister of the King of Bavaria. She made a clandestine match with a man whom she called in her lectures "a shell of a husband." She said of runaway marriages, "My advice to all girls contemplating such a step is that they had better hang or drown themselves just one hour before they start."

L. S. P.—1. The Cathedral of Palermo (Sicily) is a Gothic structure of the twelfth century, to which a modern dome has been added. The interior is supported by eighty pillars of oriental granite, and divided into chapels. 2. Palermo has a number of magnificent churches; among them is that of Santa Caterina. It is a large edifice of C rinthian architecture in the shape of a cross, with a single aisle and a dome. It has numerous paintings. A celebrated one is a Madonna, variously attributed to Rubens and Vandryke. The other churches worthy of mention are the Casa Professa, San Domenico, San Simone, San Giuseppe da Tiatini, and Santa Maria della Catena. San Domenico accommodates nearly 14,000 persons. The walls and dome of the private chapel of the royal palace, built by Roger, first King of Sicily, are covered with mosaic pictures on gold ground. 3. In winter the climate of Palermo is delightful, and a great many invalids are attracted there on that account.

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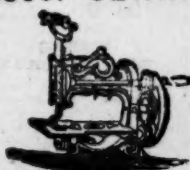
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He took advantage of Mrs. Westworth's presence to kiss her on the forehead. How could she, his affianced bride, make any objection to this? Mrs. Westworth discreetly turned her eyes the other way.

Immediately after Clement had taken his leave Grace hurried up to her room and flung herself upon the bed. She was really too miserable even to cry, and remained there, listening mechanically to the slightest sound in the street until it was almost time for dinner. At dinner-time she exerted herself to the utmost to appear in the highest spirits, and everyone remarked how wonderfully well she looked that night.

When she again retired to her own room it was for the purpose of writing a letter to her father, informing him of her approaching marriage with Clement Dale.

"I don't care for him very much," her letter concluded; "but he is very rich, and I shall soon be able to help you out of your money troubles, dear papa."

She wrote no letter to Giffard Ray, for she had not the heart to do it. Her father would most certainly tell him the news of her engagement with Clement.

CHAPTER VI.

THE excitement was great next morning when the Rev. Fenwick read out Grace's letter.

Mary was beside herself with delight when she heard that her sister was engaged to be married, for now she stood no longer between Giffard and her. All that day nothing was talked about but the approaching marriage, and Mary wrote to her sister offering to be bridesmaid.

Now that Grace was no longer her rival she felt her old affection return to her heart, and she recalled the many kindnesses her sister had shown to her. Her heart no longer embittered by jealousy she felt really ashamed of her wicked thoughts and the spiteful wishes she had uttered against her sister.

The letter she had written to her sister was the kindest one she had ever penned, and she felt sure that Grace would appreciate it when it reached her.

As she stood watching at the window looking out for Giffard she wondered how he would take the news of Grace's approaching marriage. She knew that it would be a great blow for him, and she had made up her mind to break the news as gently as she could.

He would be grateful for her sympathy, and perhaps, when his grief had gradually worn away, he would turn to her for consolation. Mary devoutly hoped that he would do so. As long as a girl is unmarried a lover, no matter how scornfully he may be treated, will always hope; but marriage puts a fatal barrier between them.

If Giffard Ray is a wise man he will accept the inevitable, and if he cannot marry the girl he loves—well, marry the girl who loves him.

Mary was watching out of the window for Ray to prevent anyone in the house from speaking to him first. She must break the news. It seems strange and almost unnatural to Mary that her sister should reject Giffard.

What could Grace be thinking of to despise the love of Giffard Ray? Was it because his rival was the richer of the two? Was it possible that Grace could weigh gold against the wealth of love that Ray had bestowed upon her?

Mary had not very long to wait before Ray came in sight, and the girl beckoned him to the window, and he came over the grass-plot.

He was quiet and subdued in manner, and evidently was oppressed by some great fear. Having received no letter from Grace he had come to the conclusion that the worst had come to pass, and that his rival, his unknown rival, had kept the promise he had made to Grace.

"You have had news for me?" he said. "I can see it in your face!"

"I always told you what Grace was," replied Mary, gently.

"Than she is going to be married?"

"She will be married in a week."

"Great Heaven!" cried Ray, in a hoarse voice, that told the girl how sharply he felt the blow. "So soon as that?"

For a moment Mary thought that he would fall to the ground in a dead faint, strong man as he was, for he staggered back. The blow was a terrible one for him, although he had half expected it.

Mary came out on to the lawn through the French window. Her eyes were full of sympathy for him, as she took his brown hand in her two little white ones.

"Poor Ray!" she said.

"I want no pity," replied Ray, with a harsh laugh, and he pushed her roughly away. He seemed as though half crazy. She had never seen him like this before. She looked at him reproachfully and rashly, but taking no more notice of her he hurried away.

Giffard Ray was seen no more at the Rectory for three whole days—neither at the Rectory or his own house. They were terrible days for him, days that he looked back at with a shudder in after years. One thought only occupied his mind—Grace was to be married. A few more hours, and Grace would be as though dead to him for ever.

The weather was terribly bad the whole three days; but heedless of this Giffard Ray hurried down muddy lanes, and through dark and dismal woods. The rain came down in torrents, and the wind came in fierce gusts, sweeping the leaves from the almost dismantled trees. He could not eat he could not sleep, but he could drink. A fierce thirst was upon him that nothing could quench. He entered village inns, in which rough labourers were congregated, and listened to their coarse jests, and paid for gallons of drink. They could have floated in it if they had liked; but when the evening came to an end, Giffard Ray, who had drunk more than any one in the place, was perfectly sober, while the labourers went off staggering to their homes.

With unkempt hair and wild eyes, Giffard Ray wandered aimlessly along, with one name on his lips, one thought in his heart. His clothes were covered with mud, and he was covered with mud. But he was heedless of this. To tell the truth, he gloried in the wind and rain, and as he looked at the rotting leaves that he trampled under foot he gave vent to loud, incoherent laughter. These brown decaying leaves had once been green and bright, and had made the empty boughs above his head pleasant to the eye, the rustling of the foliage had been music to the listening ear. These decaying leaves seemed symbolic of human hopes and wishes. Like those leaves the young and hopeful would be soon brought low.

At length, after three days of wandering through the foul weather, Ray returned to his home, footsore and haggard. He had not taken off his clothes for three whole days, for the only rest he had had was in some barn or outhouse.

The servant that opened the door to him looked at him in amazement, as well he might, for covered with mud almost from head to foot Giffard Ray looked more like a tramp than a prosperous gentleman. Giffard saw the look of wondering surprise on the man's face, but he heeded it not. What cared he for the opinion of any one now? All the world could think that he was mad if they liked.

All muddy and wet as he was he threw himself upon the bed, not even taking the trouble to take off his boots. He was thoroughly exhausted. Nature could hold out no longer. He fell asleep; but in that sleep he suffered quite as keenly as in his waking moment, for he dreamed of Grace and of her marriage.

When he awoke darkness was coming on.

The sky looked dark and lowering, although it had ceased to rain. The sun was setting, and cast a sickly light over everything. As the evening advanced a damp, unwholesome fog came from the ground, as was to be expected, after three days of continuous rain in November. Through that fog Giffard walked to the Rectory after changing his clothes. He could keep away no longer. He wished to know if Grace had written home again?

Every one at the Rectory was surprised and pleased to see him, and he was invited to take the nearest seat by the fire, for the night was damp and cold. Jack ventured to ask where he had been to, and when he told him he had been walking miles and miles, they looked at him in amazement.

During the evening Grace's name was mentioned many times, and Ray was told that Mary had gone up to town to act as bridesmaid.

Ray listened with dull apathy to all that was said, but all of a sudden he leaped from his chair in fierce anger. The name of Clement Dale had been mentioned.

"Clement Dale!" he cried. "Is Grace going to marry Clement Dale?"

"Then you know him," said the clergyman, looking at him in surprise.

"Know him. Yes, for the greatest scoundrel in the world, and my bitterest enemy."

"You say this because you are jealous of him," said Mr. Fenwick, quickly.

"I am jealous of him," admitted Ray, standing before the fire, "because I love his promised bride. But that is not the reason I call him a scoundrel."

"Let us hear why you use such harsh terms towards him?" said Nicholas Fenwick, mildly.

"I have no time to answer idle questions now," said Ray, buttoning his coat. "I am going to London."

"What for?"

"To stay the marriage."

"You talk like a madman!" said Mr. Fenwick.

"And feel like one too," replied Ray, going towards the door.

"The last train has gone. You cannot go to London to-night," said the clergyman. "There is no reason why you should be in such a hurry. They are not going to be married for two days!"

"It is better for Grace to know everything about Clement Dale at once," said Ray. "Good-night, Mr. Fenwick; I am going to save your daughter from worse than death."

In another moment he was gone, and his footsteps died away in the distance. It was true, as the worthy Rector had said, that the last train had started for London fully half-an-hour ago.

Ray knew this perfectly well, but he also knew that there was a large junction twelve miles away.

He must get there somehow. There were no cabs at Collingford, so Ray had to go to a friendly farmer, and ask him to lend him his cart.

The farmer hesitated at first, for the roads were in such a horrible state; but when Ray told him how important it was for him to get to London as soon as possible, he gave a reluctant consent.

The most unfortunate thing was, however, that there was no one to accompany Ray, and he had very little knowledge of the road he had to take.

It was a miserable ride through the thick fog, and more than once Ray took wrong turnings and had to go back, but by dint of inquiries at cottages and wayside inns he got within three miles of the junction. But now an unexpected difficulty presented itself. The horse, thoroughly exhausted by the bad roads—it had been working all day—either would not or could not proceed one inch further, so Ray had to leave it in charge of the landlord of a public house, and walk the rest of the way.

The lights and signals of the junction looked

provokingly near when Ray could see them, which was only when he was on the summit of a hill.

But at length he reached the station, only, however, in time to see the last train gliding out.

He would have leaped into the train at the risk of his life had not two porters dragged him back.

For a moment he felt inclined to strike them, but restrained himself by a great effort of will, for, after all, the men were only doing their duty; so instead of using violence against them he gave them half-a-crown each, and inquired if they knew where he could put up for the night.

His question was easily answered; and, after finding out the time the earliest train started for London he went to the "Black Horse."

When shown to the room Giffard did not go to bed at once, but sat in an old rickety chair, thinking of the time when he and Clement Dale had been friends.

Giffard Ray was an inexperienced youth when they first met, unversed in the ways of the world.

The other, a man of the world, and a bad one too, had led Ray into all kinds of follies and dissipations, and was answerable for almost all the sins which Ray had committed in his wild youth, and which he now looked back upon with such bitter and unavailing regret.

Let the crowning act of Clement Dale's villainy be told.

In order to screen himself from the consequences of a crime he had committed the vile wretch had made a false accusation against Giffard Ray, and had it not been for the merest accident in the world he would have been sentenced to a long term of penal servitude.

Ray was perfectly certain that Clement Dale had committed the crime of which he had accused him; but at the time he had not been able to bring proof against him.

But a few weeks ago he had been called to the bedside of a dying man, who confessed that Clement and he had been guilty of the crime of which he, Ray, had been accused.

So many years had intervened since the accusation and the trial that Ray had determined not to punish Clement Dale for his treachery. He had been almost inclined to burn the papers.

However, now that Clement Dale was about to marry Grace, the papers in Ray's possession would come in useful.

Can it be wondered at that Giffard Ray hated Clement Dale?

His face grew hard and stern, and he clenched his fist, muttering,—

"At last, Clement Dale, we shall meet again, face to face!"

Giffard Ray was on the platform at five o'clock, long before it was daylight; and a few minutes afterwards was in the train bound for London. All the way up he was thinking how he could break the news to Grace.

How glad she would be to be released from this man! She had never loved him. How delighted she would feel to escape from being the wife of such a villain!

There was one great fear at Giffard's heart.

What if Clement Dale had altered the wedding day, and Grace was already married to him? This thought made Giffard turn deathly pale, so pale that a fellow-passenger asked him if he were ill.

Even if Grace were his wife, he had the power of going with a detective and taking him away to prison.

It was ten o'clock when the train steamed into a London station, and Giffard Ray at once took a cab to Bloomsbury-square.

On inquiring for Graces at Mrs. Wentworth's house, he was calmly informed by a very pretty servant that she had gone away two days before.

"Where had she gone to?" Giffard asked eagerly, so eagerly that the girl looked at him in surprise.

"I do not know where Miss Grace has gone," the girl replied.

Beside himself with terror, and with a dark foreboding at his heart, Ray demanded to see Mrs. Wentworth. His request was at once complied with.

In as few words as possible Ray explained the object of his visit, and asked Mrs. Wentworth to tell him where Grace resided.

Mrs. Wentworth confessed that she knew very well where Grace was staying, but she flatly refused to make him acquainted with the address. He asked her pointedly her reason, and she replied that Mary had told her that Clement Dale had a rival named Giffard Ray, and that, in all probability, he would come and try and persuade Grace to break off her marriage. So, in order to prevent such a contingency, Grace and her sister had taken lodgings some distance from Bloomsbury-square, and would remain there until her marriage morn.

"Then she is not married? Thank Heaven for that!" said Giffard Ray. "I swear to Heaven that I will part them yet!"

Mrs. Wentworth smiled incredulously as she listened to Giffard's extravagant language.

"If you were not in love I should think you a madman!" she said.

"Mrs. Wentworth," cried Ray, earnestly, "if you have any love for Grace you will tell me her address. I wish to save her from a life of misery—to prevent her marriage with a villain!"

"You call him a villain because he is your successful rival!" said Mrs. Wentworth, and there was contempt in her tone. "You have no right to blacken the character of Clement Dale because he is engaged to the woman you love."

Giffard Ray made no reply, but rushed out of the house, and jumped into the cab that was waiting for him.

He had only four-and-twenty hours to find Grace, and in a great city like London. It was like looking for a needle in a bottle of hay! In twenty-four hours Clement Dale and Grace would be standing side by side at the altar rails!

CHAPTER VII.

WHICH of them should Ray endeavour to trace out—Clement Dale or Grace Fenwick? This was what Ray asked himself as the cab dashed along.

At length he came to the conclusion that there would be more chance of discovering Clement Dale than Grace, and made up his mind that he would not leave a stone unturned to find him out.

If Clement Dale had been an honourable man he would have disliked him for taking Grace from him, but now he positively hated him as he had never believed he could hate a fellow-creature. How dare this crime-stained man marry a poor and innocent creature like Grace!

When evening came on Ray had not found out either Grace's or Clement's whereabouts, and he wandered aimlessly about the streets, feeling more and more every moment how hopeless his task was.

At length he betook himself to Scotland-yard, and soon explained the object of his visit.

"Clement Dale," said the detective, who happened to be in the room, "he is wanted already for the great diamond robbery—the cleverest robbery I have ever heard of. He was never suspected until to-day. Do you know where he can be found, sir?"

"Unfortunately I do not," replied Ray. "I wish I did; for without he is arrested before twelve o'clock to-morrow, he will be married to a young girl I take a great interest in."

"I see," said the detective. "Do you happen

to know if he is to be married in a church or a registrar's office?"

"No," said Ray.

"Anyway, he has not left the country, and I shall be sure to catch him!" cried the detective.

"But will you arrest him before twelve o'clock?" asked Ray, anxiously.

It was life and death to him, and he listens anxiously for the man's answer.

"This Clement Dale has plenty of money," observed the detective; "and, thinking that no one is aware of his guilt in regard to the diamonds, will most likely get married in some swell West-end church. It will be easy to find out which one it is. Besides, an inquiry can be made at every registrar's office in London. No, he can't escape us now—not a bit of it!"

Notwithstanding the confident assurances of the policeman, Ray felt very uneasy in his mind. If, by the slightest oversight, the police should make a mistake, Grace might still become Clement's wife before he was arrested.

He was in a terribly nervous state, and he felt quite bewildered; unable to think or speak coherently. Once more he returned to Bloomsbury-square, and once more he was refused Grace's address, and Mrs. Wentworth told him plainly that if he did not leave her house at once she would have him expelled from it. He gave such a fierce glance of rage that she recoiled from him in fear; and he with a muttered oath dashed down the stairs.

A boy with a parcel in his hand was talking to the servant, and Ray heard him say,—

"Please will you give this to Miss Fenwick. I was told to wait for the money."

"Miss Fenwick don't live here now," replied the servant, while, in order to have some excuse for listening, Ray stood at the bottom of the steps lighting a cigar.

"But the young lady ordered these things a week ago," replied the boy, "and gave this address. What am I to do?"

"I'll go and ask my mistress," said the girl. "Very likely she will tell you what to do."

The boy thanked the servant, and began whistling while the girl went upstairs.

"Very likely she will tell him the address she refused me," thought Ray, walking a little way from the house. "Anyway, I'll interview the boy, and find out what Mrs. Wentworth tells him to do."

In a few moments the boy came whistling along the pavement, with the package still under his arm.

"Where are you going to take that parcel?" asked Ray, abruptly.

"What is that to you?" said the boy, bluntly.

"Come, tell the truth. Are you going to take that parcel back to the shop, or to another address? Answer the question, and you shall have half-a-crown."

"To another address," said the boy, holding out his hand.

"What is the address?" said Ray, impatiently.

The boy told him what he desired so much to know. It was not so very far from the square in which he was standing. Quickly Ray called a passing hansom, and bade the boy jump in. After a moment's hesitation, and a keen scrutiny of Ray's face, the boy did as desired.

In ten minutes the cab stopped before the house in which Grace resided. How quickly Ray's heart beat! His hand trembled so that he had great difficulty to open his purse to pay the cabman. By the time he had settled with him the boy had knocked at the door, and was handing in the parcel.

"I wish to see Miss Fenwick on important business," said Ray, and he spoke in such a commanding way that without a moment's hesitation the landlady led him up the stairs, taking care, however, to ask his name.

"Mr. Ray!" said the woman, opening a door, and there was a startled cry in the room

—a cry that had come from the heart of Grace Fenwick.

She rose from a chair as Ray entered the room, looking white and agitated, and saying in a low voice—

"Oh, Giffard, this is cruel!"

"I have traced you out in spite of all your precautions," said Ray, taking her hand in his.

Mary was in the room, sitting on a low stool. She could only look with her dark eyes at Ray. She was too surprised to speak.

"You shouldn't have come here, Giffard," said Grace, sadly. "For Heaven's sake go. I will not listen to reproaches."

"Grace, Grace! I have come to save you."

"To save me?" said Grace.

"Yes, yes, to save you from that villain, Clement Dale."

"Remember, Giffard, that you are speaking of my future husband," said Grace, with quiet dignity. "It is not for me to listen in silence to such language."

"You must—you shall listen," said Ray, sternly.

Grace put her fingers to her ears, but he dragged her hands thus forcibly away. The girl looked at the man's white, determined face, and saw that she had met with her master. With a weary sigh she sank back into a chair.

"I will listen to all you have to say," she said, not daring to glance at Ray again.

"You must not listen to a word," said Mary. "What would Clement Dale say if he found you and your old sweetheart together?"

But neither Grace nor Ray took any notice of Mary's words, for the young man was telling her as quickly and coherently as he could in his excitement all about Clement Dale's villainy; how he had nearly contrived to get Ray accused of a crime, and finally the story of the diamond robbery.

When he had finished, Grace, with tearful, grateful eyes, told him of her gratitude; and then he took her in his arms and kissed her again and again. He was just in the act of pressing a fervent kiss on her ruby lips when the door opened, and Clement entered the room.

Their backs were turned; they did not see him. For a moment or two he stood in the doorway looking like one utterly turned to stone.

"Here is Clement Dale!" cried Mary, who had caught sight of him.

"The warning comes too late," said Clement, advancing into the room. "I have seen quite enough to convince me that Grace Fenwick is a traitress. Take your arms from that scoundrel's neck, woman, and let me give him the thrashing he deserves."

He raised his stick in the air as he spoke, his face convulsed with rage.

"You are the scoundrel!" cried Ray, turning round and confronting him.

The look of passion died away from Clement's face as he recognised Ray, giving place to one of terror. The stick dropped from his nerveless hands, and with a wild cry he rushed from the room.

Ray would have started in pursuit had not Grace clung to him tightly.

"Be merciful, Ray!" she cried. "If he can escape from the police let him do so. You shall have no hand in his arrest."

"He cannot escape!" said Ray. "The police are on his track. Every part will be watched, and every policeman will be on the look-out for the great diamond robber."

Grace gave a startled cry as a sharp report was heard in the street; the report of a pistol. Ray rushed to the window and flung it wide open, and the girls and the man looked out.

On the ground beneath the window lay Clement Dale. By the light of the gas-lamp they saw his ghastly face and half-a-dozen policemen gathered round him, and a crowd of civilians were hurrying up from all directions.

Clement Dale had shot himself to avoid imprisonment.

"The diamonds will never be found," were

his last words. "I have hidden them where no one will think of looking."

The scene was a horrible one. And as Clement Dale fell back dead Ray caught Grace in his arms, for she had fainted right away.

So long was Grace in recovering from her fainting fit that a doctor was sent for, and when he saw her he shook his head gravely, and said the shock had been too much for her nerves.

For many days all was a weary blank for Grace; and Ray watched by her bedside in the greatest anxiety in company with Mary, who, now that she was almost at death's door, forgot her love for Ray in her anxiety for her sister.

If she only recovered from her illness Mary would never be envious or jealous of her again, she told herself.

When Grace was declared to be out of danger the papers had ceased to dilate upon the extraordinary diamond robbery.

The inquest had taken place upon Clement Dale's body, and it was long ago buried in a quiet churchyard in his native place, near to a village where an old aunt who loved him dearly lived.

He had treated her most ungratefully, had rewarded her kindness with the blackest villainy; but she loved him still, and often afterwards she was seen placing a bunch of flowers or a wreath on that felon's grave.

As for the diamonds that he had stolen—it was as he said. He had concealed them so well in some mysterious place, that, in spite of every effort, they could not be discovered, and remain undiscovered till this day. But no doubt, in the course of years, they will come to light, and let us hope that they will fall into the possession of deserving hands.

It is scarcely necessary for us to tell the inquiring reader that Grace and Ray are now married; but it is necessary to add that Ray, having come into some money from an almost forgotten relation, is now living in luxury and ease at Fenwick Hall with his young and beautiful wife.

[THE END.]

ENGAGEMENT RINGS.—A French writer says: "Do not choose the ruby; it is too showy, loud and indiscreet. Good taste inclines toward the sapphire and diamond, of which it is said, one does not look well without the other. Do not choose a large sapphire surrounded by diamonds, but ask your jeweller, artist to interlace in happy combination the sapphire and the diamond. The turquoise is also a tasteful stone, but when it is constantly worn, it has the immense disadvantage to change colour, and to this change most women attach a sad and sentimental superstition. It should not, therefore, be chosen for the first present, which is to be worn and cherished while life lasts, which remains from the days of youth, while everything else changes."

THE SNAIL HARVEST.—In France, snails are called "the poor man's oysters." They are so appreciated that Paris alone consumes about forty-nine tons daily, the best kind coming from Grenoble or Burgundy. The finest specimens are carefully reared in a small park, such as the poor Capuchin monks planned in bygone days at Colmar and Weinbach, when they had no money to buy food, and so cultivated snails. But the majority are collected by the vine-dressers; in the evening, from the stone-heaps where the snails have assembled to enjoy the dew. The creatures are then starved in a dark cellar for two months, and when they have closed up the aperture of their shell are ready for cooking. According to the true Burgundy method, they are boiled in five or six waters, extracted from the shell, dressed with fresh butter and garlic; then replaced in the shell, covered with parsley and bread-crumbs, and finally simmered in white wine.

FACETIÆ.

LADY (to servant, whom she is about to engage): "These are my conditions; do they suit you?" Servant: "H'm! I'll see. I always take ladies on trial."

"Can I negotiate a loan?" said a seedy-looking chap, as he entered a bank. "Yes, you can negotiate alone. At least you can't negotiate with us."

A LITTLE girl went timidly in a shop, and asked the shopman how many shobstrings she could get for a penny. "How long do you want them?" he asked. "I want them to keep," was the answer, in a tone of slight surprise.

TOMMY went fishing the other day without permission of his mother. Next morning a neighbour's son met him, and asked: "Did you catch anything yesterday, Tommy?" "Not till I got home," was the rather sad response.

A CHILD, while walking through an art gallery with her mother, was attracted by a statue of Minerva. "Who is that?" said she. "My child, that is Minerva, the goddess of wisdom." "Why didn't they make her husband too?" "Because she had none, my child." "That was because she was wise, wasn't it, mamma?" was the artless reply.

ONE WAS QUITE ENOUGH.—"No," said the henpecked husband, as he scratched his bald head. "I am not a believer in Mormonism, not by a long chalk." "Why not?" asked the Mormon sympathiser, with whom he was conversing. "Because," replied the henpecked man, "I don't believe in a man having two wives. No man can serve two mistresses."

HOW SODA WATER TASTES.—It was Freddy's first experience with soda-water. Drinking his glass with perhaps undue eagerness, he was aware of a tingling sensation in his nostrils. "How do you like it?" inquired his mother, who had stood treat. Freddy thought a moment, winking his nose as he did so, and then observed: "It tastes like your foot was asleep."

CAUSE FOR KILLING.—A wag who is often merry over his personal plainness tells this story of himself. "I went to a chemist the other day for a dose of morphine for a sick friend. The assistant objected to give it to me without a prescription, evidently fearing that I intended to commit suicide. 'Pshaw,' said I, 'do I look like a man who would kill himself?' Gazing steadily at me for a moment, he replied: 'I don't know. It seems to me if I looked like you I should be greatly tempted to kill myself.'"

JONES was looking around a picture exhibition with an artist friend, who had the good luck to have one of his pictures receive an "honourable mention." "Show me," he said, "the successful painting." "There it is, the portrait of a lady." "Oh! charming as to execution, but how did you come to get hold of such an ugly model?" "Why, it happens to be my mother," replied the artist. "Your mother!" exclaimed poor Jones, greatly embarrassed. "Dear me! You must pardon me; and still, if I hadn't been such a stupid, I might have recognised it. Why, you're as alike as two peas!"

BAD BUTTER.—"Mr. Flipkins," said Widow Cushmanigan, his landlady, "I do wish when you take pay in trade from your country subscribers, that you would be more careful and not allow them to palm off bad butter on you. I lost two boarders this morning, owing to your not tasting that butter last night before you brought it home." "What butter? I didn't bring home any butter." "Why, that box of butter you left on the window seat in the dining-room. Clairette found it after you had gone upstairs." "Great heaven! You didn't use that for butter, did you? I hunted high and low for that box and thought I had lost it. It was a box of axle-grease. Farmer Dobbin asked me to buy and send to him by express."

SOCIETY.

THE PRINCE OF WALES AT INVERCAULD.—His Royal Highness's stay extended over the greater part of a week. Deer drives in the neighbouring forests were arranged, and a large party met His Royal Highness. After leaving Invercauld the Prince stayed for a day or two with the Earl of Fife, at Mar Lodge, and went deer-stalking in Mar Forest.

The stay of the Court at Balmoral depends on Princess Beatrice's health, which at present is all that could be wished. Her *accouchement* is expected about the middle of November at farthest, and will take place at Windsor. The Queen is anxious to get the journey over as soon as practicable. Her Majesty will be present at the event, under any circumstances.

The Grand Duke of Hesse, with his daughters Irene and Alice, have been visitors at Balmoral for a short time. Rumours are afloat that the visit is partly connected with the matrimonial prospects of the young ladies.

The health of Queen Christina of Spain, says *Modern Society*, has been seriously affected by the disturbing events in Madrid of the past week or so. The poor little woman felt the throne, which she is trying so pluckily to hold for her son, totter beneath her feet, and in her anguish, she is said to have fled to her oratory and prayed long and wildly for the protection and support of Heaven. Then she betook herself again to her children and clasped the infant king again and again to her breast, still murmuring agitated petitions to the Blessed Virgin. Never since her husband's death has she been in such sore distress. But upon her arrival in Madrid from La Granja, she laid aside the weak woman and became a Queen, and while with her Ministers displayed the coolness of a man.

St. Paul's Church, Knightsbridge, was filled with a fashionable congregation to witness the marriage of Viscount St. John, eldest son of the Earl of Courtown, to Miss Gertrude Mills, eldest daughter of General and Mrs. Charles Mills.

The bride was followed to the altar by six bridesmaids, dressed in pretty costumes of white muslin with moire silk sashes, and white lace trimmed with gold braid and daisies. Each carried a basket of white and pink flowers, and wore a pearl shamrock brooch, the gifts of the bridegroom. The bride was attired in a costume of white duchesse satin trimmed with Brussels lace and small sprays of orange blossom, Brussels lace veil and diamond ornaments.

Lord and Lady Londonderry made their first public appearance as the "Lord and Lady Lieutenant" of Ireland at Baldoyle autumn races. The Marchioness of Londonderry was dressed in a grey costume, trimmed with velvet; a grey hat with white wings; a mantle to match, trimmed with chinchilla, and wore in addition a sable muff and box, and heavy dark blue Connemara cloak, the hood of which was lined with crimson. Lady Alexandrina Vane Tempest wore a costume of olive-brown vicuña, the tight-fitting jacket bordered with dark fur, and an olive-brown hat with red wings.

Lady Eva Wyndham Quin had a dress of brown and heliotrope stripes, and dark brown hat with large heliotrope bow. Lady Ardilaun wore a dress of black cashmere, the front panel richly embroidered, a tight fitting crimson jacket and black hat, with red trimming. The Countess of Fingall and her sister, Miss Bourke, were in black dresses and hats, with grey covert jacket. Lady Katharine Wheble wore a dress of black yak lace, a black bonnet and handsome broché velvet mantle.

Lady Power had a costume of black faille with jet trimming, and a black hat. Her sister, Miss Segrave, wore a dark blue tailor-made costume, and a hat to correspond, with white wings.

STATISTICS.

RECENTLY published records show that there are 725,000 more females than males in this country.

RAISINS.—In ten years the consumption of raisins and currants in France has increased from about 6,000 tons annually to 65,000 tons. They are used in the manufacture of wine, which is said to be perfectly wholesome.

SIZE OF HAIRS.—Measurements have shown the thickness of the human hair to vary from the two-hundred-and-fiftieth to the six-hundredth part of an inch. The silk-worm's thread is one five-thousandth of an inch thick, and the spider's web only one thirty-thousandth. Blonde hair is the finest, and red the coarsest. Taking four heads of hair of equal weight, a patient German physiologist found the red one to contain about 90,000 hairs; the black, 103,000; the brown, 109,000; and the blonde, 140,000.

PAPER.—The consumption of paper, and the volume of its manufacture are sometimes taken as standards of civilization. The United States has 884 paper mills and 1,106 paper machines. Germany has 809 mills and 891 machines; France 420 mills and 525 machines; England 361 mills, 541 machines; Scotland 69 mills, 98 machines; Ireland 13 mills, 13 machines; Russia 133 mills, 137 machines; and Austria 220 mills, 270 machines. The average annual production of paper in all countries is estimated at 2,800,000 tons—a quantity which fairly entitles the present age to be called the age of paper.

GEMS.

THE best preparation for the future is to drain the present of every good thing it holds.

THE moral law is written on the tablets of eternity. For every false word or unrighteous deed, for cruelty or oppression, for lust or vanity, the price has to be paid at last.

WHERE necessity ends, desire and curiosity begin, and no sooner are we supplied with everything nature can demand, than we sit down to contrive artificial appetites.

FAME is an undertaker that pays but little attention to the living, but bedizens the dead, furnishes out their funerals and carries them to the grave.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SPONGE CAKE.—Four eggs, their weight in pulverized sugar, the weight of two eggs in flour. Beat the eggs and sugar well together for a quarter of an hour. Then lightly stir in the flour, taking care not to beat the mixture again, only to stir it together. Add a few drops of any essence, and bake in a buttered tin for half or three-quarters of an hour.

CRAB-APPLE PRESERVE.—Select perfect ones; pour boiling water over them, which removes the skin; lay them in water enough to cover them; let them simmer slowly until soft; take them out and drain; make a clear syrup, pound for pound; boil them in it till clear; lay them on dishes to cool, and place them in jars; cook the syrup a little longer, and pour it over the apples when hot; seal.

FRIED CAULIFLOWER.—Fried cauliflower must be served hot. Clean and wash the cauliflower well, parboil in salt and water, and cut in small pieces. Make a batter of three table-spoonfuls of flour, with two yolks of eggs and cold water or milk enough to make a thin paste, adding half a teaspoonful of olive oil and a little salt, mixing well. Beat the white of the eggs to a stiff froth, and mix with the rest. Dip the pieces of the cauliflower in the batter and fry in hot fat. Take them out of the pan with a skimmer, turn them in a warm colander, and sprinkle salt over them, serving hot.

MISCELLANEOUS.

HARD-WORKED GERMAN WOMEN.—Much has been written in the German press of late about the over-working of female employés in the various branches of the public service. Judging from the statements published, it would, indeed, seem as though a speedy reform were urgently needed. Female telegraphists are working for monthly wages of four pounds, a rate at which their male competitors positively scorn to engage themselves, especially since the weaker sex are required to work not only more hours per day, but to supply gratuitously the places of those of their sisters who are allowed a furlough of some days now and then. Another instance is that of the female employés in the Berlin Tramway Company, to the number of forty, all single women, and taken from the cultivated class of society, who are compelled to do hard and exhaustive service at a monthly pay of two pounds ten shillings, and only after long years may aspire to the maximum allowance of four pounds five shillings. These women, except in cases of serious indisposition temporarily incapacitating them for work, and duly certified to by a medical superintendent, are never given a real furlough, since in every instance they have to supply a substitute at their own expense. In view of these and similar cases, it would appear as though Germany might be a fertile soil for the advocates of woman suffrage, which latter might more readily secure redress for the wrongs inflicted by the male taskmasters.

A DANISH COUNTRY SEAT.—We spent a day at a country seat about an hour out of town, says a recent traveller, where we found in perfection this charming combination of simplicity and luxury. The house was old and built around three sides of a court-yard as large as a public square. A delightfully irregular house of uneven growth; some rooms moderately large and opening together, while others were really great halls, many opening out by stone balconies and steps to the rich velvety green of old lawns running down to the sandy beach of the blue Baltic. Trees of age and beauty that it made one glad to see were everywhere about this domain, while back of it lay a famous beech wood and deer park. This we visited in a little basket waggon, driving among the tame deer. The beeches were of immense size and very old. Their strange weird trunks covered with whitish bark made them phantom-like in the green dusk of the forest. This wood was only a part of the royal deer forest. Mr. S— recently bought it from the crown, giving eighty thousand pounds sterling for this addition to his old estate, which had a long frontage on the Baltic. For a fishing village on his estate he had built a fine breakwater. Our Danish friends were intimate here, and told us of the good providence the whole family were to their tenants and people. At dinner the fish was from their own waters, the venison and birds from their own forests, the luscious peaches and grapes from their own glass-houses, and the flowers were from their fields as well as those cultivated. To us, accustomed only to the unbroken green of our wheat-fields—corn, as it is called in England—the gay beauty of north European corn flowers in a wheat-field is something fascinating. I had said something of this pleasure to the eye as we had travelled northward. In one room, where a pale blue glazed chintz covered the walls as well as the furniture, and the light was softened by abundant white muslin curtains, a large window was filled by a tall basket stand with its tiers of trays filled entirely by blue corn flowers, relieved by borders of the loveliest white roses; and in the next room, where everything was pale pink, the wild sweetbrier was the only flower. Great vases of fine china and majolica had the poppy and ripe wheat with blue and yellow corn flowers everywhere. My friends told me the sisters, three girls of remarkable beauty, had themselves arranged the flowers to please me.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LINA.—You write a very nice hand, but if it were larger it would be more fashionable.

A. B. G.—You will obtain the desired information at the American Exchange, 449, West Strand, London.

RISHTON.—Very fashionable. The colour depends on the complexion. Ask a lady friend what would suit you.

A VICTIM.—Possibly you are right, but we cannot enter into the question in these columns. Write to the editor of a daily paper.

CAMBODIAN.—The monthly parts are published on the 15th of every month. Part 292 on 16th September. See notice at foot of correspondence column.

"TWO YEARS' READER."—1. Any chemist will tell you it varies slightly according to circumstances. 2. Not perhaps too young, but quite young enough. 3. Fair composition and writing.

L. D. S.—1. The term penny, when used to mark the size of nails, is supposed to be a corruption of *penny*. Tens, a four-penny nail was such that 1,000 of them weighed four pounds; a ten-penny such that 1,000 weighed ten pounds. 2. The making of nails dates as far back as the art of working metals.

L. PENN.—Saul, the first king of Israel had four, according to some writers six, sons, three of whom, including Jonathan, the intimate friend of David, fell with their father in their battle against the Philistines at Mount Gilboa. He had also two daughters, Merab, the first born, and Michal, the wife of David.

C. D. D.—Suppose you turn your attention to wood-carving. You are crippled by the skating-rink accident—and will not be able to walk for a year or more. You want occupation, and think plaque-painting and embroidery overdone. You live in a well-wooded county, and can get plenty of samples to experiment on, and if you become an adept, you can find sale for your work.

H. H. S.—The Dry Tortugas, a group of ten islets or keys forming part of Florida, at the extremity of the Florida Key, lie just within the Gulf of Mexico. The islets, which are of coral formation, are low and barren, except where partly covered with mangrove bushes. On Bush or Garden Key is Fort Jefferson, which was used during the American War as a penal station for Confederate prisoners.

B. B. K.—Let the matter rest, and take the lesson of it to heart. You yielded to the temptation to flirt with a stranger and a man, handsome, but not a well-bred and refined gentleman. He said coarse things to you, and now you ask must I not tell my husband and have him call the man to account. No, the fault is yours. Repel the man firmly yourself and do not make a bad thing worse by involving your husband in a difficulty.

C. K. M.—To make ginger-beer (two gallons) put two gallons of cold water into a pot upon the fire; add to it two ounces of good ginger, bruised, and two pounds of white or brown sugar. Let all this come to a boil, and continue boiling for about half an hour. Then strain the liquor and pour it into a jar or tub, along with one sliced lemon and half an ounce of cream of tartar. When nearly cold put in a teaspoonful of yeast to cause the liquor to work. The beer is now made; and after it has worked for two days, strain and bottle it for use. Tie down the corks firmly.

EDITH.—The best way to make yourself attractive is not to seek to shine, be attentive without being obtrusive, and don't flirt. Men are apt rather to seek those who require courting than those who meet them halfway. Surely at your age you need not despair, or even consider that you have one foot on the shelf. Remember the old adage, and a pretty one too—

"There never yet was goose so grey,
But some day, soon or late;
Some honest gender came that way,
And took her for his mate."

LINETTE.—You are too young to receive "beaus." It is better to be spending the time in study. Your letter is not at all good in point of grammar and spelling as it should be, though the writing is fine and firm and shows character. It is probable you could make yourself a cultivated woman—a pleasure to yourself and your friends if you would give the go-by to lovers and acquiesce for the next three golden years. If the stories told your cousin by your treacherous friend were "lies" as you say, then they will eventually be found out. She will fall of her design.

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WILLIE'S WIFE.

Willie's wife is a winsome thing,
Full of engaging ways;
And Willie's heart is ready to sing
A canticle in her praise.
She is youthful and gay, and so
Eager to wander to and fro,
She seems to fancy an idle life
Is best adapted to Willie's wife.

Every day, like an honest lad,
From early morning till late,
Willie cheerfully toils to add
To the wealth of his pretty mate.
Hard his labour, and small his gains,
At which the little woman complains,
Who ought to feel it the pride of her life
That she was chosen as Willie's wife.

Willie is gentle, and kind, and true,
And not much given to roan,
And does the very best he can do
To add to the joys of home;
But Willie's wife, it is said to see,
Is not the helpmate she ought to be,
And Willie over his tasks must bend,
To get enough money for her to spend.

The little woman is laying up
A store of grief and remorse,
And sorrow will soon embitter her cup,
Unless she change her course;
For Willie may struggle to roll up wealth,
And lose his courage, and lose his health,
And loving union give way to strife,
And the chief one to blame will be Willie's wife.

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A. V. V.—It is difficult to tell a person what a thing is, unless he has had personal experience of it. Perhaps you remember the sad fate of the missionary who attempted to describe ice to the Eastern despot who had never known a temperature less than sixty degrees. The despot, not being able to understand how water could become solid, thought the missionary had told him false about ice, and had him beheaded. If you had never tasted sugar, or anything else that was sweet, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to tell you what sugar is, so that you would understand it.

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LADYBIRD.—You are right. Don't wear "any old things" if you can help it. You will look and feel dowdy, and you want to get all the good out of your trip. Get yourself a navy-blue flannel dress—nothing keeps its own like navy-blue flannel—light it up with crimson. Get a gentleman's straw hat—also carry a common shade hat. Take a long flannel or cashmere wrapper, and some grey linen aprons. Instead of collars and cuffs, take some canvas strips to make fresh ruffling for your throat and wrists. Take a "housewife" well supplied with needles and thread, and some bits of the material of your dress in case of rents. Leave all ribbons and jewellery. Have stout walking-shoes, dark stockings, and a pair of slippers. They are quite nice in camps in these days of progress. They are even luxurious, though freedom, ease, and unconventionality reign.

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DORINE.—A runaway match is certainly to be avoided if possible. It is so much sweeter to have the good will and blessing of the "old folks." There are various ways you might try to win the favour of the young lady's mother. Lola Montes was quite a famous female of this century. She was a dancer, an actress, a lecturer—the favourite and real prime minister of the King of Bavaria. She made a scandalous match with a man whom she called in her lectures "a shill of a husband." She said of runaway marriages, "My advice to all girls contemplating such a step is that they had better hang or drown themselves just one hour before they start."

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LINA.—You write a very nice hand, but if it were larger it would be more fashionable.

A. B. G.—You will obtain the desired information at the American Exchange, 449, West Strand, London.

RIGHTON.—Very fashionable. The colour depends on the complexion. Ask a lady friend what would suit you.

A VICTIM.—Possibly you are right, but we cannot enter into the question in these columns. Write to the editor of a daily paper.

CAMBOURNIAN.—The monthly parts are published on the 15th of every month. Part 292 on 15th September. See notice at foot of correspondence column.

"TWO YEARS' READER"—1. Any chemist will tell you it varies slightly according to circumstances. 2. Not perhaps too young, but quite young enough. 3. Fair composition and writing.

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From SYMES & Co., Pharmaceutical Chemists, Medical Hall, Simla, January 5, 1880.

DEAR SIR,—We embrace this opportunity of congratulating you upon the wide-spread reputation this justly esteemed medicine, Dr. J. Collis Browne's Chlorodyne, has earned for itself, not only in Hindostan, but all over the East. As a remedy of general utility, we much question whether a better is imported into the country, and we shall be glad to hear of its finding a place in every Anglo-Indian home. We could multiply instances *ad infinitum* of the extraordinary efficacy of Dr. Collis Browne's Chlorodyne in Diarrhoea and Dysentery, Spasms, Cramps, Neuralgia, the Vomiting of Pregnancy, and as a general sedative, that have occurred under our personal observation during many years. In Choleraic Diarrhoea, and even in the more terrible forms of Cholera itself, we have witnessed its surprisingly controlling power. We have never used any other form of this medicine than Collis Browne's, from a firm conviction that it is decidedly the best, and also from a sense of duty we owe to the profession and the public, as we are of opinion that the substitution of any other than Collis Browne's is a deliberate breach of faith on the part of the Chemist to prescribe and patient alike.

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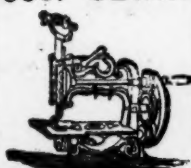
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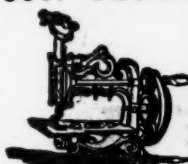
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